



# THE INDEPENDENT

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## World Cup tickets being touted on the Web

Unauthorised dealers are selling huge blocks of World Cup tickets on the Internet, despite a ferocious row about the lack of tickets for English and Scottish fans. All the unauthorised tickets have been provided through black-market deals. An Independent investigation has provoked the French organisers into looking at the activities of a US-based agency.

The organisers of this summer's World Cup in France are investigating an unauthorised American ticket agency's claim that official tour operators are providing it with tickets to sell on the black market. The move follows an investigation by *The Independent* into the availability of tickets for the tournament through unofficial sources. If the claim proves to be true, it would undermine not only the integrity of the agents involved, but also raise further questions about why so few

EXCLUSIVE  
BY NICK HARRIS

tickets are available directly to fans of the teams involved.

Seventeen travel agents around the world are authorised by Fifa, football's world governing body, to sell 8 per cent of all tickets for the World Cup, which amounts to 200,000 individual tickets. However, several unauthorised companies are advertising tickets on the Internet. Some are advertising tickets for every game in the competition, including the final.

The French Organising Committee (CFO) says it will investigate an unauthorised American agency, 24/7 Ticket Service, based in Atlanta, which advertises worldwide on the Internet and which claims it is able to fulfil orders for World Cup tickets because it is supplied directly by official agents.

Selling on World Cup tickets for profit is illegal in France and the CFO says that it will take legal action against anyone offering tickets for sale without authorisation, including companies in America.

*The Independent*, having seen tickets being advertised by the 24/7 Ticket Service, posed as a buyer and requested tickets for various fixtures, including England's three opening group games, the quarter- and semi-finals and the final.

A 24/7 spokesman said there would be no problem and eventually agreed to provide 477 premium tickets, with a face value of approximately £19,000, at a cost of £244,000 (a profit of 1.184 per cent).

He also provided a written confirmation that claimed: "My sources are official tour operators as assigned by Fifa in North America and Europe. These



Victory: Zinho celebrates after Brazil's 1994 World Cup win in Pasadena. Photograph: EM Pics

are contacts that my company has used in the past with the previous World Cup and Olympics. The relationships are solid."

The agent said all tickets would be delivered by 1 June, as soon as the authorised agents had taken delivery from the CFO, which will issue them in May. Sixty per cent of seats have been allocated to French fans, 20 per cent to sponsors and authorised agencies for distribution in travel packages, and the remaining 20 per cent to Fifa to divide between the two sides playing each game and 200 national football federations.

For England's opening game against Tunisia, which will be played on 15 June in a 60,000-seat stadium in Marseilles, 36,000 tickets will be

held by people who bought them in France, 12,000 by those who bought them from authorised agents or were supplied by sponsors, and 12,000 by Fifa.

England's allocation will come from this last 12,000, and will amount to 4,800, or 8 per cent of the total.

With England's official supporters club alone having 32,000 members, many of whom will want tickets, it is obvious there will be a shortfall in supply. This is already a major concern for the authorised travel agents in Britain.

*The Independent* spoke to two of the Fifa-licensed travel agencies based in England and asked them whether they knew of official agencies which dealt with American unauthorised ticket agencies. John

Hall, of Gullivers Sports Travel, said his company only sold tickets in Europe. "As part of the commitment with the CFO, we appoint agents in other European countries," he said. He added that his company, along with the other European-based agencies, will receive 150 tickets per European team for each game involving a European side, and that he and his appointed agents in Europe would sell them all within Europe as stipulated by the CFO.

Mike Burton, of Mike Burton Sports Travel, said that he was also dealing only within Europe with IATA-bonded travel agents appointed by him in 15 European countries. He said he was unaware of any agents selling on to unauthorised agents.

## Welfare splits the nation, says Blair. But could it be his Vietnam?

A campaign for welfare reform opened yesterday with the Prime Minister condemning an outdated system that had helped create two nations, while William Hague warned that welfare would be Labour's Vietnam - a disaster. Our Political Editor reports on the start of a critical debate.

mitting more troops in the hope it will lead to salvation. In the end they will be forced to withdraw through lack of resources."

The Prime Minister's spokesman said Mr Blair was attempting to deal with a legacy of failure after 18 years of Conservative government. In 1993, they had attempted to generate a debate for change, but the problems had continued to grow.

Last night, in a speech to party members in Dudley, West Midlands, Mr Blair said the

1979, the figure was now one in five - defined as those living on less than half average income.

Another "focus file" said the poorest 10 per cent of pensioners were on an average weekly gross income of £69.90, compared with £602.50 for the top 10 per cent of pensioners.

There was no mention of the "affluence test" mooted at the weekend by Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, and Mr Blair said: "The state pension will remain the foundation for security in retirement. Those of working age who through illness, disability or caring responsibilities cannot work, will always be protected by a Labour government."

Mr Blair set out four founding principles for change: society had a responsibility to help people in genuine need, unable to look after themselves; individuals had a responsibility to provide for themselves, when they could so; work was the best way out of poverty for those able to work; and fraud and abuse would not be tolerated.

More detail was provided by Frank Field, the minister for welfare reform, in a speech to the Thatcherite Centre for Policy Studies last night.

He said there was no question of a "big bang" approach to reform, because that would risk collateral damage to the innocent, but he did argue for a "patchwork", "a rich diversity" or a "mixed economy" of welfare provision, with the Government as a partner, not a dictator, in the construction of a new welfare state.

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Politics, page 10

BY ANTHONY BEVINS

welfare state was neither a pathway out of poverty nor a route to dignity in retirement; but rather a dead end for too many. A long-term, thought-out change of structure was necessary, even if the rewards did not come until the next century.

"To those who doubt we should do it," the Prime Minister said, "to those who believe it is too risky, too tricky, or even unnecessary, I say examine the evidence."

"With your head, I ask you to look at the facts. With your heart, I ask you to look at the current suffering. Then tell me the status quo is an option."

Among the many points made in a fact-packed assortment of social security "focus files", it was stated that while one in ten had been living in poverty when Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in

Tony Blair last night appealed to Labour activists to help build a national consensus for change in a welfare system that had split the nation - "one nation trapped on benefits, the other paying for them."

"One nation in growing poverty, shut out from society's mainstream, the other watching social security spending rise and rise, until it costs more than health, education, law and order and employment put together."

The Conservative leader said Mr Blair was a salesman without a product - before going on to compare the campaign to America's disastrous and humiliating débâcle in Vietnam.

"This is a noble cause," William Hague told a Parliamentary Press Gallery lunch. "But as with Vietnam, they are not sure why they are there; they don't know how to bring to an end what they are opposed to; they do not know what victory is."

"But they will keep com-

## TODAY'S NEWS

### Trekkers save Tibetans

A Scottish couple have rescued a group of Tibetan refugees caught in snowstorms in the Himalayan mountains and led them to safety in Kathmandu.

Stuart Findlay and his girlfriend, Claire McNaughton, trekked for miles with the group of refugees, many of whom were sick and dying. "They had been walking for three weeks wearing little and they only had thin tennis shoes on their feet. They were suffering from terrible frostbite and hadn't eaten properly for days," Mr Findlay said. Page 3

### Bluebell medicine

Treatments for HIV infection and cancer could be developed from the humble bluebell after a Government scientific body joined forces with a drug company yesterday to spearhead research.

Scientists at an institute in Wales have shown that bluebells, and their close relation the harebell, are packed with drugs which they use as a defence mechanism against animals and insect pests. Page 17

### Doubts on oldest mother

There was a mystery last night about the age of Elizabeth Buttle, a Welsh farmer, who is reported to have become Britain's oldest natural mother at the age of 60.

Medical experts said that while a natural birth to a woman of 54 would be exceptional, at 60 it would be miraculous. The confusion appears to have arisen from a discrepancy between Mrs Buttle's medical record, which gives her age as 54, and her birth certificate which gives her date of birth as 10 February 1937. Page 3

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THIS SATURDAY IN THE

FIVE-SECTION INDEPENDENT

The world of  
visual arts plus how  
to find a bargain  
THE MAGAZINE



From Singapore to  
Madrid TIME OFF  
TV, movies, clubs:  
the top guide THE EYE

Spread betting:  
Make a mint,  
don't lose your  
shirt YOUR MONEY

## Mystery over age of the 'oldest mother'

Welsh farm owner, Elizabeth Buttle, has become Britain's oldest natural mother at the age of 60. Or has she? Jeremy Lorraine, health editor, looks at the tangled circumstances of an extraordinary birth.

Caesarean section last November at the West Wales General Hospital, Carmarthen, but details only emerged on Wednesday. Doctors had feared the child would be at risk of a chromosomal abnormality such as Down's syndrome, which is higher in older mothers, but he was born healthy. Mrs Buttle attributed her achievement to the "clean country air" and expressed a desire to be left to get on with running her farms, of which she owns several around Cwmman, near Lampeter. The father of the boy, Peter Rawstron, also appeared shy of publicity after it emerged that he had left his wife to live with Mrs Buttle. There was confusion, too, over Mrs Buttle's age which was



Elizabeth Buttle: 60 or 54?

variously reported as 54 and 60. Medical experts said that while a natural birth to a woman of 54 would be exceptional, at 60 it would be miraculous. If confirmed, it would exceed by five

years the previous British record held by Kathleen Campbell, who was 55 when she had a her son, Joby, in 1987 in Nottingham.

The confusion appears to have arisen from a discrepancy between Mrs Buttle's hospital medical record, which gives her age as 54, and her birth certificate which gives her date of birth as 10 February 1937, making her 61 next month.

Checks by the Press Association at the Family Records Centre in London revealed an Elizabeth Espley, Mrs Buttle's maiden name, was born early in 1937 in the Chester area and there were no further births registered in the same name before late 1945.

Mrs Buttle, who has been

married twice and whose second husband died 10 years ago, said she was delighted to have a new son. "He is my little miracle and he makes me feel like a young woman again. I feel perfectly well and I don't know what the fuss is about. There were no complications and the hospital staff were absolutely marvellous."

Mrs Rawstron, wife of the boy's father, who still sees her husband every day as they run the family agricultural business together, said: "He's been foolish to say the least. I'm very unhappy about the whole situation. Most babies are a cause for celebration but this one is not."

Professor David James, head of fetal medicine at the University of Nottingham, said:

"Women cease their periods around the age of 50 plus or minus three or four years. Fifty-four is therefore one end of the possible spectrum. If a woman is well past her menopause it theoretically should be impossible for her to conceive." All a woman's eggs are present in her ovaries at birth. When the last egg has been released, the menopause ensues. The main limitation on motherhood in the fifties is the age of the egg.

West Wales General hospital was making no comment yesterday on Mrs Buttle's delivery, but earlier John Power, chief executive, said women of her age were given special care by the midwives. "We are all delighted the baby was born healthy and has continued to do well."

## Scottish couple rescue Tibetan refugees

A Scottish couple who were on a trekking holiday in the Himalayas carried out a dramatic rescue of a group of Tibetan refugees. Ian Burrell recounts an adventure story which echoes the film *Seven Years in Tibet*.

Through the falling snow, the Tibetans had walked and climbed for three weeks, covering 600 miles of icy and mountainous terrain in their desperate bid for freedom.

By the time they reached Nepal, the freezing conditions had claimed the lives of five of their number; a 16-year-old monk and four children aged 11 and 12, whose bodies were left as they fell.

Claire McNaughton and her boyfriend Stuart Findlay, who were on trekking holiday, had just stopped for a cup of tea at the top of the 19,000ft-high Nangpa-la-a pass when one of the Tibetans, a young Buddhist nun, sat down beside them. As she took off her shoes and socks, they stared in shock at her frostbite.

Ms McNaughton, 32, told *The Independent* yesterday: "We realised that if she didn't get medical help, she would have serious problems with gangrene."

Ignoring advice from other Western trekkers not to get involved, the Edinburgh couple resolved to help the nun and her companions.

"They had been walking for three weeks wearing little and they only had thin tennis shoes on their feet. They were on the point of death and I think they knew it," said Mr Findlay, 36.

"They were still walking but most of them were hobbling and their only possessions were the clothes they were standing in. We decided that we had to



help two of the ones who were suffering the most."

One 11-year-old Tibetan girl was suffering from exhaustion and Mr Findlay took her in his arms, while Ms McNaughton and four hired

porters helped the nun as they walked for nine hours - climbing a total of 3,000ft in the process - to a hospital established by the mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary at Khunde, near Namche Bazaar, 90 miles

north east of Kathmandu. They then contacted representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who arranged for a rescue party with horses to help the other Tibetans.

Mr Findlay said: "We trekked after them and found them in a terrible state. Many of them were close to death and we had to get them out of there as soon as possible."

The Nepalese police pro-

vided the horses to carry the Tibetans to a refugee camp and later flew them to Kathmandu where they were treated for frostbite and exhaustion.

One 22-year-old man had to have both his legs amputated below the knee.

The 21 refugees had been on the run from Tibet - a country whose plight was recently brought into sharp focus by the film *Seven Years in Tibet*, starring Brad Pitt.

The dreadful weather conditions make this the most popular time of the year for Tibetan refugees to make the crossing as they rightly believe that border patrols are at a minimum.

Ms McNaughton said that some of the children were being sent to Nepal to join schools run by the exiled Tibetan government in India because they are so opposed to schools in Tibet, which are controlled by the Chinese. Many of the adults were hoping to join monasteries or nunneries in India.

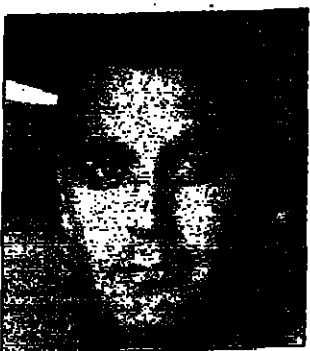
The Scots couple had spent two months trekking in Nepal, when in December a snowstorm hit the Himalayan region near Mount Everest. Within 36 hours, more than 3ft of snow had fallen, leaving many mountain-side villages isolated.

Ms McNaughton, who runs a small garden nursery in Edinburgh, and Mr Findlay, who is currently unemployed, returned to Scotland two weeks ago.

Ms McNaughton said they hoped to return to the Himalayas to see how the Tibetans were recovering.

"My lasting memory is a mixture of the shock of seeing how badly injured they were and of being able to help another human being even though you were unable to speak to them. There was a bond between us," she said. "We have also had first-hand experience of the tragedy that is Tibet and that has opened our eyes."

## ER becomes most expensive programme in TV history



Clooney: £100,000 an episode

The cast of the cult television soap *ER* have become the highest paid performers in television history, with the NBC network in America agreeing to pay £8.2m per one hour episode in order to keep the show for another three years.

The hospital drama, which is broadcast first on Sky in Britain and the on C4, stars the heart throb George

Clooney and, since last year, the British actress Alex Kingston, star of *Moll Flanders* on British television and the former wife of the actor Ralph Fiennes.

*ER* has been America's number one prime-time show with a weekly audience of 33 million. The new three-year deal with *ER*'s creators, Warner Brothers, will work out at £36m for 22 episodes

per season. NBC at present pays "just" £1m per episode and earns around £10m in advertising.

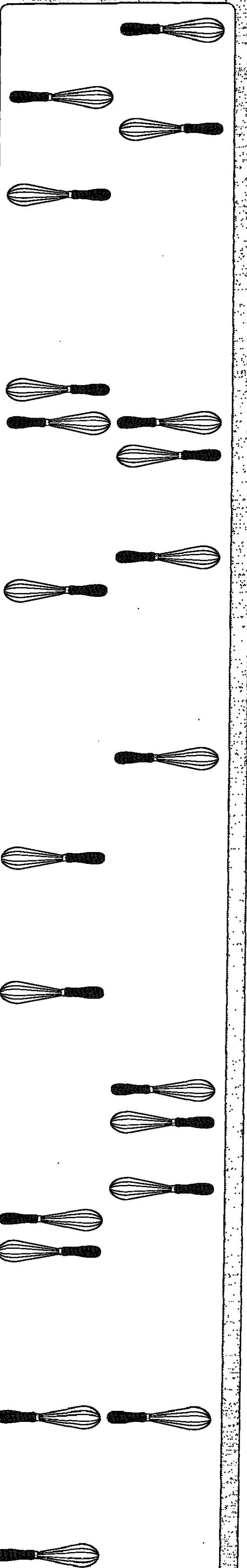
The new fee per episode easily beats the present record holder - £3m per episode for the American comedy *Seinfeld*, also on NBC. The star of that show, Jerry Seinfeld, has decided to close the show at the end of the year.

As for the stars of *ER*, George Clooney is the highest paid member of the cast earning around £100,000 an episode. Alex Kingston, who has rapidly become a key member of the cast since making her debut in the documentary-within-a-drama opening to the latest series, earns around £30,000 per episode, only half as much as the highest paid female star,

Julianne Margulies. How much each actor receives under the new deal will depend on the new contracts their agents will hurriedly negotiate.

The desire of other American networks, including Rupert Murdoch's Fox empire, to lure the show away from NBC hastened the network's decision to pay out the record sum.

WINTER SALE  
ENDS SUNDAY 18TH JAN



HEAL'S

TOTTENHAM CAT RD W1 - KINGS RD SW3 - TUNSGATE GUILDFORD

## Pigs to be spared from the chop

As one of the Tamworth Two was cornered in a Wiltshire garden last night, their owner relented and announced that he was willing to cut a deal with anyone who wanted to adopt his pigs.

As darkness fell, three police officers and an RSPCA inspector were trying to round up the fugitive, but the whereabouts of his partner was still unknown.

The pigs' owner, Arnoldo Dijulio, had insisted that once the five-month-old boars were apprehended he would see that they were taken back to the slaughterhouse, but yesterday he said: "If somebody makes an offer to me then I can sell the pigs and they can take them off my hands." Had they met their intended fate they would have fetched £40 each; their celebrity status means they could now be worth much more.

As the fugitives entered their second week of freedom, Mr Dijulio was being inundated with offers of sanctuary. "They have been ringing my work, ringing up from London and sending a helicopter," he said.

The eight-stone pigs have been nicknamed Fred and Ginger by local residents in Malmesbury, Wiltshire, "because they had to have performed some pretty fancy footwork to have escaped the butcher's knife".

— Clare Garner



Waxing lyrical: Poets Roger McGough (standing), Andrew Motion, Moniza Alvi (left) and Carol Anne Duffy judging the National Poetry Competition in London yesterday. A record number of more than 9,000 entries are vying for the £5,000 prize. Photograph: David Rose

## Diana fund satisfied with lawyers' fees

Trustees of the Diana Memorial Fund denied they were sacking their lawyers over a £500,000 bill. But one MP described the charge as 'extravagant'. Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, looks at an embarrassing row over the fund.

The trustees and the lawyers, Mishcon de Reya, were upset yesterday over reports of a fall-out over the legal bill. In a statement the Board of Trustees of the £37.5m fund said the fees, incurred over three months, were "if anything, on the low side". And Anthony Julius, chairman of the board of trustees, a partner of the firm and friend of the Princess, was said to be "deeply upset" at the publicity surrounding him and the firm's bill.

An inquiry was launched to find the "source" who told the *Mirror* of the firm's confidential billing arrangements and who claimed the trustees were considering changing their lawyers because of the cost.

The *Independent* understands the person has already been identified and "will be asked to account for their actions". It emerged that the Charity Commission told the trustees of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund at its creation that there was poten-

tial conflict of interest in having as chairman of trustees a lawyer, Mr Julius, whose firm was also acting as their lawyers.

A commission spokeswoman said it was a matter of "bringing it to their attention" and they received a reply saying the fund was being charged by the lawyers on a not-profit making basis.

In its statement the board, which will announce the first beneficiaries of the fund in March, said it considered Mishcon's fees to be "reasonable and appropriate for the work undertaken". None of the legal costs would be made from donations by members of the public but come from the commercial side of the fund, such as establishing copyright for the multi-million-selling Diana tribute album.

Trustee Vivienne Parry said: "The financial benefits from the commercial projects being established by Mishcon de Reya will massively outweigh the costs of setting them up... This is an absolute storm in a tea-cup."

John Jackson, non-solicitor chairman of Mishcon de Reya, said it had discounted its fees by 20 per cent as a contribution towards good works the fund was hoping to carry out. The firm says much of the money has gone on fixed costs.

Labour MP Robin Corbett described the charges as extravagant; people who had contributed to the fund would be "upset and displeased".

# Shopping this weekend? Don't forget the list.

- 1 special edition (pref. 3 doors)
- Bags of style
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- Engine immobiliser
- Twin speaker radio/cassette (not tinny)
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- Tinted glass (ice cool)
- Rear fog lamp
- **LATEST** finance deals?! +
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- Headlamps must be **HALOGEN**
- **DON'T FORGET!**
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## Police shoot 'unarmed' man

A man shot dead yesterday by police in his flat is thought to have been unarmed. The 39-year-old man was shot once in the chest during the raid on the flat in St Leonards, East Sussex and died shortly afterwards. A woman who was with him was not hurt but needed treatment for shock.

An independent investigation has been launched and will be overseen by the Police Complaints Authority and a senior officer from the Kent Constabulary. But Sussex Chief Constable Paul Whitehouse said he did not believe any of his officers had acted improperly. He said that the raid, by officers from the Special Operations Unit, was part of an investigation into an attempted murder and cocaine trafficking. "None of the officers has been suspended because I have no evidence available to me to make me take that course of action. It is not normal procedure to suspend people in such circumstances," Mr Whitehouse said. The operation involved 30 officers, but it is thought only four entered the room where the man died.

## Papergirl raped

Police are appealing for witnesses after a 14-year-old girl was raped as she started her early morning round delivering newspapers. The girl, from South Shields, Tyne and Wear, was attacked in the Harton area of the town. A man approached her from behind, pulled her into a lane and raped her.

The girl is said to be shocked and extremely upset over the attack, which happened at about 7am on 6 January. She is being comforted by police, family and friends.

Her attacker is described as in his 20s, medium build and of mixed race, with golden coloured skin. He had black hair, short at the sides, longer on top, and a Tyneside accent. He was wearing a yellow jacket and smart black dress trousers.

Police say there is no connection between the attack and the rape of a 15-year-old girl a few days later in Hebburn, South Tyneside.

## Branson trial halted

The Richard Branson libel trial was halted yesterday after one of the jurors appeared to faint in court. Proceedings had earlier been delayed because she had been suffering from a migraine. The judge, Mr Justice Morland, adjourned the case at the High Court until this morning.

Mr Branson is suing Guy Snowden, one of the directors of Camelot, for libel, while in turn Mr Snowden is suing him. The case centres on Mr Branson's allegation that the American businessman had tried to bribe him in 1993 to drop his bid to run the National Lottery.

## DAILY POEM

### On being the littlest Russian nest egg doll

By Gillian Allnutt

I hear hearts beating round me, four or five of them, like drums  
We are inside. We are immortal. We are wood.

I hear the soft wood-fibre settle into knots.

I hear the plot and fidget and the role  
of Masha, Masha.

We are all called Masha.

I hear the first five notes of song that Noah's wife took with her  
when the waters broke, about

the Volga boatmen. Now I hear the shous.

Our Daily Poems today and on Monday (when the winner will be announced) come from the volumes shortlisted for the 1997 T S Eliot Prize, presented by the Poetry Book Society. All the authors will take part in a reading on Sunday at 7.30pm in the Almeida Theatre, London N1 (box office: 0171-359 4404). This poem comes from *Nantucket and the Angel* (Bloodaxe, £6.95). © Gillian Allnutt.



## Busy children make better readers

Busy under-eights who rush from one activity to another tend to be better readers than their less active peers, says a survey. Judith Judd, Education Editor, looks at findings which suggest that children with a varied lifestyle do better even than those who never watch television.

Football at 3.30? Tea with Henrietta at 5? Computer games at 6.30? For those parents who spend their lives taxiing children from one pursuit to the next, the news is good. It may all be worthwhile. A survey of more than 5,000 eight-year-olds by the National Foundation for Educational Research shows that moderation in all things is the key to success.

Researchers asked children how often they took part in six activities: watching television or videos, playing with friends, playing sports, reading books, doing jobs at home and playing computer games. They were asked in questionnaires to reply "most days", "some days" or "never".

Their replies were then compared with their score in standardised reading tests. Except in the case of reading books, children who did the various activities sometimes had higher scores than those who did them most days or never.

Unsurprisingly, children who never read books and who spent most time on other activities read less well than others but there was no significant difference between those who read most days and those who read only on some days.

Children who never watched television had lower scores than those who watched it some days though half of the sample said that they preferred watching television to reading books.

The authors, Greg Brooks, Ian Schagen and Peggy Nastat, are cautious about their findings and say further investigation is needed into why a broad span of out-of-school activities appears to be associated with better reading.

Mr Schagen said yesterday: "It may simply be that those with more varied lives are brighter."

About one-fifth of children said that they never read out of school and had already switched off reading, a pattern which is likely to persist into adulthood, according to the study. Their attitude was reflected in their scores in the tests.

"The problems of pupils who have negative attitudes to reading, or report difficulty in reading, or read infrequently for



Going places: Eight-year-olds who spent their time on many different activities scored better in reading tests than less-active contemporaries, says a survey

pleasure, need to be tackled very early in their school lives," the authors say.

The report says that reading standards of eight-year-olds have remained largely unchanged since the Second World War, apart

from a fall between 1967 and 1991. Standards rose again after 1991 and by 1995 were back to the same level as in 1987.

It suggests that the reason for the fall in the late Eighties may have been the introduction of the

National Curriculum in 1988 and the high turn-over of teachers during the same period.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, yesterday attacked parents who ignored their children's education be-

cause they were "too busy". The tough message came at a conference in Sheffield, where Mr Blunkett said parents had a key role in raising school standards.

Parents could no more plead poverty as an excuse than a lack

of time, Mr Blunkett said, adding that, in helping parents, the Government had to be "both tough and tender". "Far from being a nanny state, we must become an enabling state which ensures that... families have the backing they need."

## Education grants 'a lottery'

Funding for further education students is a lottery. They are second-class citizens compared with their counterparts in universities, says a report from the Policy Studies Institute, an independent research body.

The Prime Minister has committed the Government to increasing the number of further education students. But, the authors point out, though the number has increased dramatically in recent years, the proportion from poor families has not. They are being put off by the lack of financial help.

In a far-reaching condemnation of the present system, the report says that only 3 per cent of England's 3.5 million further education students receive discretionary grants while three-quarters of full-time higher education students have mandatory grants.

Spending on discretionary grants has fallen by a third over the past five years. In 1994, their average value was just £665 compared with £1,527 for a higher education student on a mandatory grant living at home. Further education students, around three-quarters of whom are adults who are often studying part-time, also lost out in the distribution of access funds for hardship. Only 1.5 per cent receive them compared with 5 per cent of higher education students and their average value is less than a third those awarded to those in universities.

At least 100,000 further education students are on social security benefits but the Jobseeker's Allowance - which permits study for only 16 hours a week - has discouraged unemployed students.

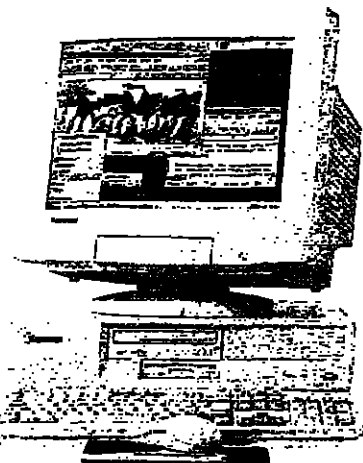
The report, commissioned by the Further Education Funding Council, reviews research evidence on the effect of the present funding arrangements on student participation. Alicia Herbert and Claire Callender argue that it is "beyond question" that financial help can encourage poor students to attend courses and stop them dropping out.

Ms Callender said: "Both discretionary awards and access funds have become no better than a lottery. Receipt of discretionary awards depends on where students live and what they study. Access funds depend on which college students attend. The distribution has little if anything to do with financial need or academic merit. The system favours young, full-time students while penalising adult and vocational students and those studying part time."

— Judith Judd

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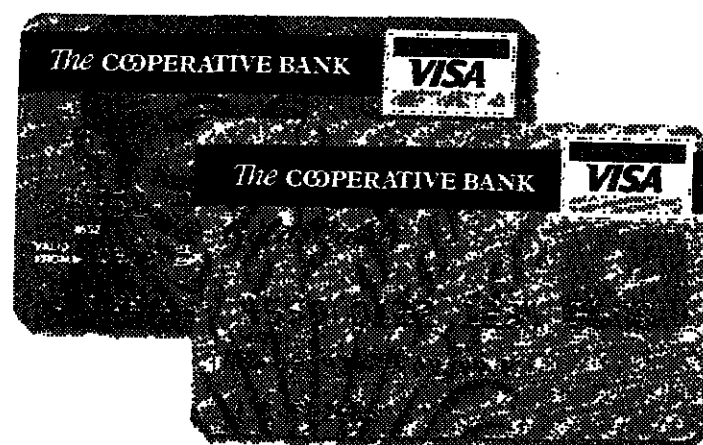
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# 8/IN THE COURTS

## Racist abuse left me in fear, says Marine who deserted

A Royal Marine deserted after "systematic" racial abuse including being ordered to carry a spear and having urine thrown on his bed, the High Court was told yesterday.

The Ministry of Defence tried to stop the action for £750,000 compensation by claiming the allegations of racial bullying were too late to be heard.

Mark Parchment, 29, pictured right, says that throughout his training he was called "nigger" and "black bastard" by NCOs. He claims he was finally forced to flee his unit in Arbroath after being subjected to a violent assault and mock crucifixion which left him in fear of his life. Mr Parchment, who now lives in London, remained "on the run" for five years until he was arrested.

The MoD denied that there had been any racial abuse and said Mr Parchment could not sue them anyway because he had left it too long to mount his claim which was now "time barred".

John Mackenzie, for the former marine, told the High Court in London that he did not realise he had suffered serious psychiatric injury because of his treatment until examined by a doctor in May 1996 and he was therefore entitled to launch his action. The hearing resumes today.



## Girl, 10, tells of gang-rape in school lavatory

A 10-year-old girl yesterday told a court she had been gang-raped by a group of her classmates. Andrew Buncombe details the girl's shocking evidence.

take part, despite the demands of the others. She said: "They were telling him to come and he was saying 'I ain't going to come'."

"I said ... please don't hurt me and he said 'I am not going to hurt you because you are my friend'."

That afternoon she returned to her lessons, not having told anyone of the incident because she was too scared. After school, she returned home with her cousin, who stayed the night at her house.

The Old Bailey was hushed yesterday as the girl told how she had been dragged into a school lavatory, forced to the ground and raped by her laughing assailants.

Speaking through a live video link, she said three of the boys took it in turn to rape and assault her while two others - one, her cousin - looked on. Often breaking down into tears, the girl - aged just nine at the time of the alleged attack - said the gang had threatened to beat her up if she told anyone.

Two 10-year-old boys are charged with rape. They are believed to be the youngest-ever rape defendants in Britain. Along with a 10 and 11-year-old, they are also charged with indecent assault. All four boys deny all the charges.

A fifth boy, aged nine at the time, has not been charged because he is below the age of criminal responsibility. None can be named.

Biting her lip and with her eyes downcast, the girl said the alleged attack at a London school had taken place during the lunch-break while other children played outside.

The boys took her coat and dragged her into the lavatory, her cousin holding her arm behind her back as she was told to take her clothes off. She struggled in vain to fight the off the boys, who tied a coat over her mouth to muffle her screams.

Her voice reduced to a whisper, she said: "[One of the boys] was saying 'Take your clothes off'. I was fighting and I was trying to fight them away but when they got my clothes off [one of the boys] lay on top of me and hurt me."

The girl started to cry as she revealed how she was forced to the ground and raped, as the on-lookers laughed at her, during the alleged incident last May. One of the gang refused to

bring a defence.

She eventually told her mother that some boys had told her to strip, but did not say any more after she was criticised for not standing up to them.

"Unfortunately, her mother did not quite take on board what she was being told," said Mark Dennis, for the prosecution.

The girl asked to stay at home the next day but her mother made her go to school, writing her a note for the headmistress asking her to investigate her daughter's claims.

The headmistress interviewed the boys and it was only at this point that the full details were revealed. Mr Dennis said one of the boys admitted to the headmistress touching the girl with his penis but all of them claimed she had consented. The police were called in and all five boys were arrested.

Mr Dennis told the court that the boys and their victim all knew each other very well. Yesterday the four boys, who were all referred to by their first names, sat in court reading books and comics they had brought with them.

The law was changed four years ago to allow boys as young as 10 to be charged with rape and Mr Dennis said one issue in the case would be whether they knew they were doing wrong. He concluded: "These days it is unrealistic to suggest that these boys did not fully appreciate that they were doing something that was plainly, seriously wrong."

The case continues.

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## Global ambitions at risk as news channel forces BBC cutbacks

The BBC has cut jobs and news bulletins from the British channel that was taking on America's CNN across the globe and winning. Paul McCann, Media Correspondent, explains how everything must be sacrificed for the little-loved domestic 24-hour news channel.

A fresh row is brewing at the BBC because its new 24-hour TV news channel is costing so much that the corporation has had to cut jobs from its global news channel BBC World.

BBC World, which broadcasts outside the UK to 50 million homes in 187 countries, is to lose 24 posts and is having some of its international output replaced by a simulcast of the recently-launched domestic channel BBC News 24.

A number of BBC World's senior editors will be made redundant, freelancers have been dropped and casual workers contracts will not be renewed because of the need to save money for News 24.

The decision has provoked anger with BBC Worldwide, the BBC's commercial and international arm which has been

developing BBC World for the past three years. Sources at BBC Worldwide claim that their international channel is exceeding all targets to reach new viewers and attract advertising revenue. In many countries BBC World has replaced Ted Turner's CNN on local cable and satellite services because of its American-centric world view. BBC World has been able to make rapid inroads because of the high reputation of the BBC's World Service radio broadcasts.

Now, however, some at BBC Worldwide believe its battle with CNN is being threatened by the need to support News 24 - a service that can be seen in Britain by only a few cable homes and those who watch once BBC goes off air at night.

"One has to wonder if the game plan isn't to subsume more and more of BBC World under a service that is not meant for international viewers," said one BBC source. "It seems that the time spent creating an international news service has been wasted. I don't think the BBC at home has ever understood how appreciated World is globally."

Until last year, BBC Worldwide had full control of BBC World, but last year another BBC restructure placed it with

in the News & Current Affairs Directorate where it has had to share budgets with News 24.

The expense of running News 24 has impacted on other parts of the News Directorate and last year provoked a revolt by the presenters of Radio 4's *Today* programme and *Newsnight* over plans to make news programmes share editors and budgets to save money.

A spokesman for the BBC said that the shared broadcasts would at present amount to just one and a half hours of programming a day and that all redundancies would be voluntary. "The BBC is taking advantage of the opportunity to jointly produce some bulletins to ensure optimum use of resources."



Humming chorus: Children from the Japanese School in Acton, west London, at auditions yesterday for *Madam Butterfly*. A new production of Puccini's opera opens on 19 February at the Albert Hall, which will be flooded to create a Japanese water-garden set. Photograph: Rui Xavier



Rock 'n' roll suicide: Kurt Cobain, who shot himself in 1994

## Festival pulls plug on film in row with rock star

The premiere of a controversial film on the lives of rock couple Courtney Love and her late husband Kurt Cobain has been cancelled following legal pressure. Tim Cornwell in Los Angeles reports.

Kurt and Courtney by award-winning British film-maker Nick Broomfield was to have been one of the highlights of this year's prestigious Sundance Film Festival in Utah. But two days before its first scheduled public screening, organisers have bowed to pressure from Love and her record label and decided to pull the plug.

The festival, founded by actor Robert Redford, has become the leading US showcase for independent films, and Love threatened a lawsuit on the grounds that it contained copyrighted music performed by her own band, Hole, and Cobain's Nirvana. Associated Press reported.

Broomfield, by contrast, claimed he had full legal clearance to use what he said were excerpts from the BBC's *Top of the Pops*.

The film-maker has built his reputation on tracking down, camera in hand, major and minor celebrities from Margaret Thatcher to Hollywood madam Heidi Fleiss, probing their lives and their associates. It is not the first time his subjects, including actress Lily Tomlin and AWB Afrikaner party leader Terre Blanche, have turned prickly.

In dealing with Love, however, he has encountered a rock music star and Hollywood persona with formidable clout, at the crest of her career. The film, he said, contained only a

brief encounter with Love, when he buttonholed her on camera as she presented a free speech award at the American Civil Liberties Union.

The Sundance Festival has prided itself on its independent spirit, operating outside the big-time Hollywood studio system. But organisers cited an ongoing legal matter to justify unceremoniously dropping the film one day before the festival was due to start.

"We have been informed that there are a number of unresolved legal matters between the film-makers and others - including unclear music rights - which make it impossible for us to present the film," a spokesman said in a prepared statement.

"We hope that Nick [Broomfield] can resolve these matters and that his film will receive the exhibition it merits."

Cobain, at age 27, one of the pre-eminent figures of the 90s rock music scene, was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in April 1994. He had recently checked out of a drug and alcohol abuse clinic.

Though devastated by his death, Love went on to build up her own highly successful rock career. Last year, she received plaudits for her screen performance as the tragic, drugged-up wife of a US porn king, starring opposite Woody Harrelson in *The People vs Larry Flynt*.

More than 100 films will be shown at this year's Sundance festival - an event for which much of Hollywood decamps, en masse, to the mountains above Salt Lake City for 10 days of skiing and networking.

Responding to the decision not to show his film, Broomfield said: "I think it's extremely sad that this festival, which is supposed to represent free speech and freedom of expression, should be behaving this way."

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## Blair: 'We'll build a Welfare State for the 21st century'

The failure of welfare was described in graphic detail by the Government yesterday, with Tony Blair taking charge of a campaign to deliver more help to the poor, while the well-off provide more help for themselves. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, analyses the latest 'Case for Welfare Reform'.

A package of seven welfare reform focus files yesterday described the problem with a welfare benefit system that, as the Prime Minister told the Cabinet, was no longer working. "We are a party committed to social justice and yet there is more poverty and social division coming out of the current system, as well as a growing cost to ordinary taxpayers," he told his colleagues before embarking on his first roadshow meeting, in the West Midlands, to make a personal case for change.

The latest fact-packed dossier updates information last presented to the country in 1993 by Peter Lilley, the Tory social security secretary, in a document called, "The Growth of Social Security".

In that paper, Mr Lilley called for "constructive national debate" on how to improve help for the vulnerable, while keeping the system affordable.

This time, however, Mr Blair is determined to see reform through, modernising the Welfare State just as he modernised the Labour Party - applying "traditional values in a modern setting".

Yesterday's "Case for Welfare Reform" said: "Our aim is to build a Welfare State fit for the 21st century, which extends opportunity and security to all."

But the principles laid down by Lord Beveridge, founder of the modern Welfare State in 1948, would remain central. "Society has a responsibility

to help people in genuine need, who are unable to look after themselves; individuals have a responsibility to help provide for themselves when they can do so; work is the best route out of poverty for people who are able to work."

The only addition to the Beveridge outline was that, fraud and abuse, now estimated at £4bn a year, or enough to build 100 hospitals, "should be minimised and rooted out wherever found".

A "focus paper" on the evolution of social security quoted from the original Beveridge White Paper of 1942, saying: "Social Security must be achieved by co-operation between the state and the individual... The state, in organising security, should not stifle in-



Lord Beveridge: Paper says his principles will remain

centive, opportunity, responsibility, in establishing a national minimum, it should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action."

But it said that in the last 50 years there had been more than 120 Acts of Parliament. "Some of the changes have been piecemeal and as a consequence, inconsistencies and illogicalities have arisen."

Almost a third of Government spending goes on benefits, and over the last 20 years there had been a significant shift in spending on lone parents; there had been a strong growth of housing benefit; and benefits for the sick and disabled had been one of the fastest growth areas.

Meanwhile the number of pensioners had grown, but their share of spending had fallen - though it still accounts for a third of all welfare expenditure.

Within that statistic, however, the gap between rich and poor pensioners had widened dramatically. The focus file on pensioners' incomes said that between 1979 - when Margaret Thatcher first took office - and 1995-96, national average earnings had increased by 38 per cent, while pensioners' incomes had risen by 64 per cent.

But that average concealed different experiences for the rich and poor. "The incomes of the poorest 10 per cent of pensioners have grown by 31 per cent in real terms since 1979. The richest tenth saw a larger real increase of 78 per cent."

The two-nation gap is also disclosed in other areas, with a polarisation between "work-rich" and "work-poor" families in which no parent works. The number of completely workless households had doubled to 3.4 million since 1979.

But society as a whole has also become less equal and the rise in spending had "failed to banish poverty".

"Between 1979 and 1996 an extra £43bn was spent on social security yet overall numbers on low incomes grew - [more than] one in four people live on less than half average income today compared with under one in 10 in 1979 (income after housing costs): 32 per cent of children (4.2 million) in 1994-95 lived in a household below half average income, against 10 per cent in 1979; in 1979, the bottom 40 per cent of individuals held 24 per cent of national income; today they hold about 20 per cent."

Setting out the principles for the first phase of reform, the Government said: "We want the debate to be based on facts, without scaremongering. Our aim is to fight poverty, not increase it; narrow social division, not widen it; and extend opportunities, not deny them."

Free copies of the focus files from the Department of Social Security on 0181 867 3201. Leading article, page 20



On the road: His crusade to sell welfare reform to the public began with a speech in the West Midlands yesterday

Photograph: David Rose

### MY AIMS: THE TEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH

The following is an edited extract of the Prime Minister's speech at a conference last year. All my political life I have been guided by these core beliefs: individuals achieve more together than they can alone; rights and responsibilities go together; every individual, no matter what their background, should be given the chance to succeed.

"My aim is to build a consensus for modernising social security. Tonight, I want to tell you why I am so passionate about this issue and why I believe the system must be improved if our

country is to become the beacon to the world I spoke of at conference last year. All my political life I have been guided by these core beliefs: individuals achieve more together than they can alone; rights and responsibilities go together; every individual, no matter what their background, should be given the chance to succeed.

"This idea of community, of a decent society, is at the heart of my ambitions for this country. That is why it is at the heart of the party's new Clause Four. It makes me want to reform the welfare state, and deliver the social justice to which we are all committed. It is a central plank of building a modern Britain.

"The reform of our welfare state is not to betray our core principles of social justice and solidarity. It is to make them live, breathe and work again for the modern age. Over the last 18 years we have become two nations - one trapped on benefits,

the other paying for them. One nation in growing poverty, shut out from society's mainstream, the other watching social security spending rise and rise, until it costs more than health, education, law and order and employment put together.

"When I look at the welfare state, I don't see a pathway out of poverty, a route into work or a gateway to dignity in retirement. I see a dead end for too many people. I do not believe this is how Attlee or Beveridge intended things to be. I want to clear the way to a new system. Long-term, thought-out, principled reform is the way forward.

"To those who doubt we should do it, to those who believe it is too risky, too tricky, or even unnecessary, I say examine the evidence.

"With your head, I ask you to look at the facts. With your heart, I ask you to look at the current suffering. Then tell me the status quo is an option."

Mr Blair said the costs of welfare, now at £80 for every family per week, was alarming, and change was essential. "But any change we make will be made on principle: and the first of these is that all those in genuine need will always be helped and supported by this Labour government."

"That is my guarantee to you as leader of the party. It is the guarantee to the people who elected me as their prime minister. The state pension will remain the foundation for security in retirement. Those of working age who through illness, disability or caring responsibilities cannot work will always be protected by a Labour government. Second, work is the best route out of poverty for those who can work. Third, we believe in the responsibility of individuals to help provide for themselves where they can do so.

"These are the original principles of Beveridge. But today's welfare state is simply not true to those principles. It is not supporting many in genuine need. It is not helping all those into work who can work. It is not encouraging personal responsibility. And there is too much fraud."

Mr Blair said it would take time to get the long-term architecture right.

"But even if the rewards come in the next century, with the welfare state put on a sound, modern footing for future generations, then it will have been worth the argument and the controversy. This government will listen. But do not be in any doubt of my determination to see this through.

"No one with a shred of compassion would say we should not protect the vulnerable. But no one with a degree of common sense would say the present system should remain untouched."

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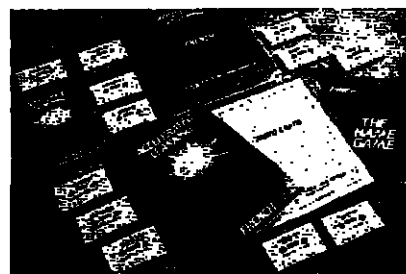
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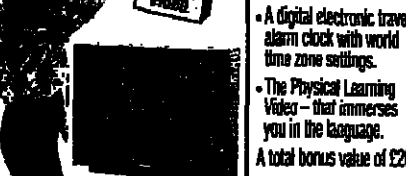
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## Britain lists assets frozen in war

The Government is to publish the names of 25,000 accounts frozen in British banks during the Second World War which included assets belonging to victims of the Nazis. Louise Jury says the move follows claims that Britain wrongly refused at the end of the war to return money to its owners.

A leading Jewish organisation last night welcomed the publication of thousands of names of people and companies whose accounts were frozen under the Trading with the Enemy Act. Lord Janner QC, chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said the next step was to compensate Holocaust victims or their heirs whose money should have been returned but never was.

All enemy assets were frozen during the war, but this included accounts held by Germans and other eastern Europeans who were victimised by the Nazi regime. After the war, the Government set up a restitution procedure for people who could prove they were victims, but the trust believes many legitimate claims were refused.

In one case, the family of a woman who killed herself rather than be taken by the Gestapo to a death camp was denied any claim because she was not actually "detained". Others were refused if they had insufficient proof of a parent or if they had been in a labour camp

rather than a death camp. Documents suggest that money not claimed was used to compensate British companies owed money or who had incurred losses as a result of the war.

The publication of the list was announced yesterday by Lord Haskel, the government whip. Lord Janner said it was a significant victory. The gesture prevented Britain from being "put together with Switzerland" which has come under intense international pressure for its handling of assets deposited in its banks.

Lord Janner said: "This is a landmark. But what the minister did not do was to say that they would take every step to ensure that justice is done." The Government must set up measures to help people bring claims, he said. The trust estimates that up to £35m at 1945 values was not restored to account owners after the war.

Miklos Breuer, 73, heir to an account, said there should be a claim procedure so the matter could be finished. His father, a Hungarian, deposited £800 at a London branch of Westminster Bank in 1938. But when Miklos tried to claim it in 1960, the bank said that the money had been given to the government and could not be retrieved.

However, a spokeswoman for the Department of Trade and Industry yesterday stressed there was no money available.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews also welcomed the announcement. The president, Eldred Jakobson, said the board had regularly pursued the matter with government authorities

## Robinson accused of tax hypocrisy

Tory MPs yesterday accused the Government of "hypocrisy" over Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, for "dodging taxes" on his £10m offshore tax shelter while preparing to close tax loopholes in the Budget. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent reports.

The only sign of irritation from Mr Robinson was the occasional flapping of a hand as Conservative MPs queued up to heap abuse on the Paymaster General during nearly an hour of Treasury questions in the first session since the controversy blew up before Christmas.

Charging the Government with hypocrisy, Mr Lilley accused Mr Robinson of a conflict of interests and being "economical with the truth".

Springing to Mr Robinson's defence, the Chancellor told Mr Lilley: "The hypocrisy is from those who refused to take any action at all when they were in Government... On the particular case of the Paymaster General which you insist on raising, he has met all the rules on ministerial conduct; and he has paid taxes in the UK to the tune of £1.5m."

Shadow Treasury Chief Secretary, David Heathcoat-Amory, asked how Mr Robinson could plausibly promote a welfare to work programme that involved cutting welfare to the poorest and raising taxes for savers.

"How can you do all that while at the same time you are yourself dodging taxes?" he demanded to Labour jeers.

Mr Robinson replied: "You seek to hide that the Tory party opposed the money and voted against the (welfare to work) programme."

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## Call for tough action against wrongdoers in police forces

MPs yesterday called for wide-ranging reforms in the way police officers are disciplined, particularly the way officers delay procedures indefinitely by going sick. But, says Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, the committee ducked the chance to set up an independent investigation system.

Aspects of the police disciplinary system have become "virtually paralysed", said Chris Mullin, chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee. Launching his committee's report, the Labour MP said there was an urgent need to restore public confidence in the way complaints against officers are handled. "There is no doubt a small minority of officers ... have effectively subverted the system by exploiting every conceivable loophole," he said. "If these people complain now, they only have themselves to blame."

Mr Mullin said he believed that the "political will exists" at the Home Office to implement their proposals, while committee colleagues said they expected action by the summer. The report was welcomed by senior officers who have complained they are often powerless to act against corrupt officers. In his evidence to the commit-

tee last month, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Condon estimated that a hard core of between 100 and 250 officers in his force were "corrupt, dishonest and unethical".

The MPs' key proposals include reducing the right of silence for officers in proceedings, removing their automatic right to escape disciplinary action if they are acquitted in criminal proceedings, and, controversially, to reduce the standard of proof required for dismissal to the "balance of probability" used in civil courts.

Mr Mullin said that as far as possible, disciplinary action against a police officer should be the same as against any employee and should be conducted with greater openness.

To prevent endless delays caused by officers going sick, the MPs recommend that action should continue despite the illness of an officer, where this does not stop him or her answering the charge.

Chief constables would also have a new "fast-track" power, where there is overwhelming evidence of misconduct, to dismiss officers immediately - though with a right of appeal.

But to the dismay of some critics, the MPs have rejected "for the time being" calling for an independent body to investigate allegations, citing impracticality and cost. Challenged on this, Mr Mullin said they had not ruled it out for the future.

An area of dissent among the MPs is the suggestion that a lesser, civil court standard of proof

be accepted even where an officer faces dismissal. The three Tory members, and the Police Federation, believe the criminal trial standard of "beyond reasonable doubt" should be kept.

David Blakey, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said: "The overwhelming majority of police officers have nothing to fear from these proposals and will be pleased that, if they are implemented, the tiny minority of wrongdoers will be able to be dealt with more effectively."

The Home Office welcomed what it described as a "very thorough and interesting" report. "Ministers are studying it carefully and we hope to respond with proposals shortly."



Old promise: Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, visiting the Ravenscliffe Estate in Bradford yesterday, fulfilling a post-election pledge that he made during a *Newsnight* debate on juvenile crime last October  
Photograph: Justin Slee/Guzelian

## Sickness that lets cheats beat the rap

The report describes a graphic example of how three Scotland Yard detectives escaped disciplinary action for moonlighting as bodyguards for a businessman. As disciplinary proceedings began, they went sick and have all since retired on ill-health pensions.

The report tells how Detective Sergeant Thomas Bradley met the wealthy businessman in 1995 when he reported to Belgrave police, claiming that two of his staff had stolen from his Knightsbridge home.

DS Bradley agreed to arrange for the man and his wife to be chauffeured and "protected" while in London. When the family next arrived in Britain later that year they were met at the airport by DS Bradley and a colleague, DS Ian Martin, who held up a placard for identification. "Mercedes cars were hired and a number of officers took turns to act as chauffeurs and bodyguards," the report says. Several thousands of pounds were to be paid for the service.

In November 1995, DS Bradley and DS Martin were

suspended from duty on full pay. DS Bradley was to have been charged with 17 disciplinary offences, including "discreditable conduct". DS Martin was due to face two disciplinary charges while a third officer, Detective Constable Barry Porter, was to have been charged with seven disciplinary offences.

All three subsequently reported sick. After legal advice, DS Bradley was granted ill-health retirement after the Metropolitan Police "reluctantly" decided it could not proceed with disciplinary charges. DS Martin and DC Porter were also granted pensions, although the force "deeply regretted" disciplinary action could not take place.

"There remains real concern that individuals who are ostensibly mentally strong before their suspension suffer severe psychiatric illness immediately afterwards and yet so quickly recover following their retirement, to the extent that they are immediately able to function in demanding areas of employment," the report concludes.

— Michael Streeter

## Heseltine breaks ranks on Dome

William Hague faced yet more dissent from his own ranks last night after Michael Heseltine went dramatically "off message" over the Millennium Dome.

While the Conservative leader and his culture spokesman, Francis Maude, had been directing their fire at the project, the former deputy prime minister decided to speak out in its support.

Worse, Mr Heseltine even had kind words for Peter Mandelson, the much-loathed minister without portfolio who is in charge of the project. Mr Mandelson was doing an important job and it was "very understandable" that he should have visited Disney World in pursuit of ideas, he said.

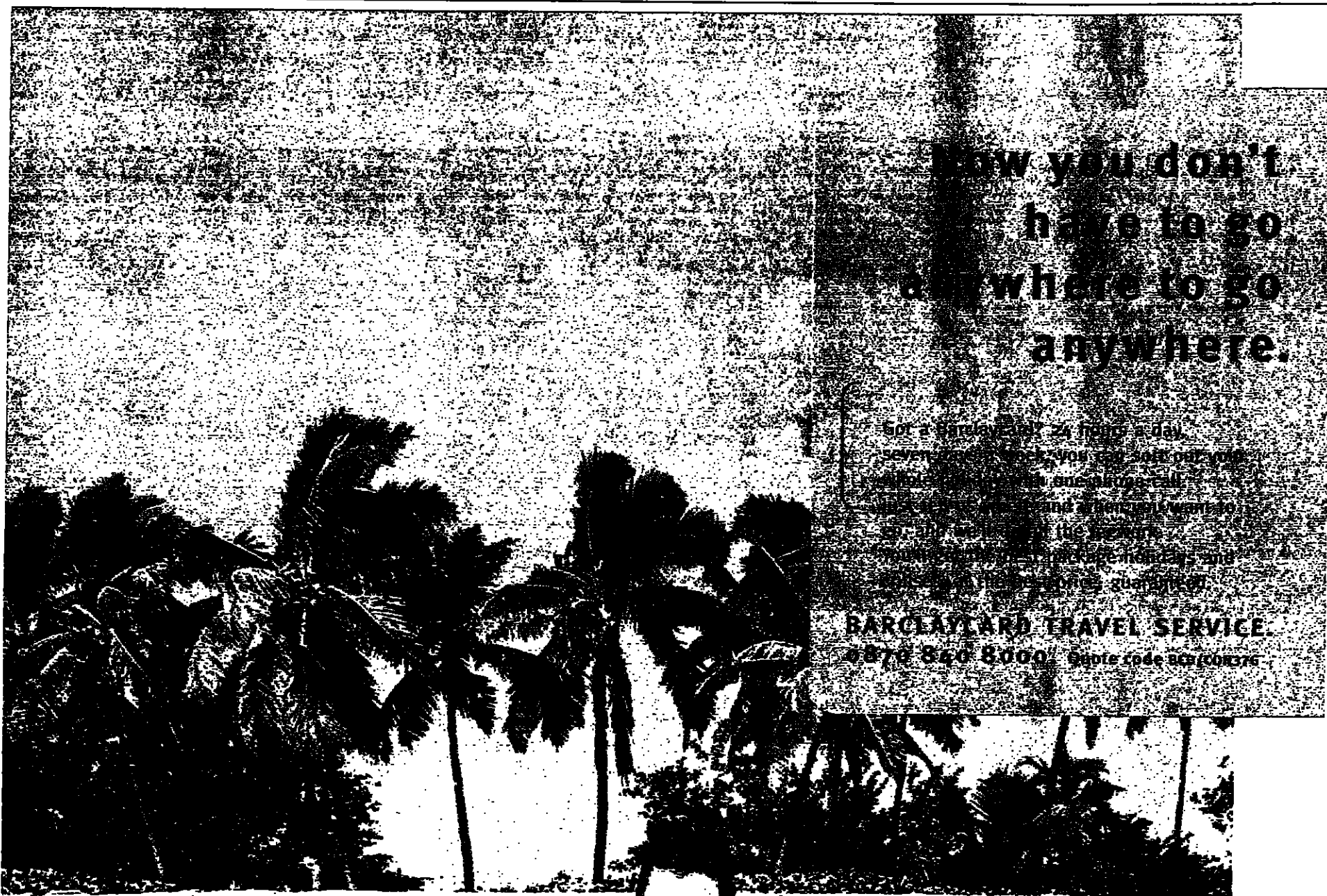
Mr Heseltine, who ran the project himself until last May, is still a millennium commissioner. Speaking of Mr Mandelson in a BBC interview, he said: "He is doing the job as well as it can be done."

It is difficult and a controversial job to do and there is no easy precedent.

"You have a huge range of people with opinions ... and all of these things have to be reconciled against deadlines and budgets," Mr Heseltine said.

"I have no doubt at all that when we get to the millennium the world will come to see what we have done and this country will stand proud of having had the courage to own the most exciting project anywhere in the world," he said.

Mr Heseltine's timing could hardly have been more embarrassing for Mr Hague, who had given an interview for tomorrow's edition of *The Spectator* in which he attacked the Government's handling of the project, saying: "There has been a huge failure of management by this Government, and unless the whole thing is to end in chaos the ministers responsible must get a grip."



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## Algeria relents over visit from EU team

Algeria yesterday relented and agreed to receive an upgraded European Union delegation to discuss the continuing massacres in the former French colony.

The visit by the team, which according to a Commission spokesman in Brussels, will discuss "all subjects, no matter how sensitive", will take place at the start of next week, in good time to submit a report to EU foreign ministers on 26 January.

With Britain in the EU chair, the *troika* mission will be headed by Derek Fatchett, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, accompanied by his opposite numbers from Luxembourg and Austria, thus substituting junior ministers for senior officials rejected by Algiers on Wednesday.

The change of mind does spare Robin Cook what would have been a notable embarrassment just a fortnight into Britain's six-month European Presidency. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary himself achieved the

breakthrough, in a telephone conversation with his Algerian opposite number, Ahmed Attaf.

But whether the visit does anything to hasten an end to the carnage which has taken some 75,000 lives in the past six years, and up to 1,700 during the first 16 days of the current holy month of Ramadan alone, is another matter.

Yesterday did bring other fragile grounds for hope, with the release of a leading member of the outlawed FIS Islamic fundamentalist group, permission for the British Ambassador, Francois Gordon, to visit Sidi Hammel, south-west of the capital where at least 100 people were slaughtered by rebel guerrillas on Sunday, and apparent approval for a separate visit by members of the European Parliament in early February.

In Algiers, Abdelkader Hachani, third ranking leader of the FIS, was freed after being detained for 24 hours for giving interviews to two French news-

papers, in which he urged foreign countries to press the Algerian government to open talks with his group. Technically, Mr Hachani could still be tried for his breach of a three-year ban on such media contact, but even if it proves merely temporary, his release seems timed to improve the political climate during the EU visit.

In Sidi Hammel, Mr Gordon was told by survivors that they had sought guns in vain from the Algerian authorities with which to protect themselves.

Another survivor, whose wife was murdered, said he tried to call the security forces during the attack, but they did not come in time. This is precisely the sort of allegation which has fanned rumours of tacit government connivance in some of the massacres, a charge furiously denied by Algiers, as it resists foreign involvement. "It is up to the English and Americans to come and protect us," the man said.

— Rupert Cornwell



Love is ... Sugar Lee Hooper (left) and Andrea van der Kaap undergoing a marriage ceremony early yesterday. Conducted by the mayor of Kaatsheval, it started at midnight on Wednesday, the earliest time allowed after giving the necessary two weeks' notice once the law permitting homosexual couples to marry in the Netherlands was passed on 1 January this year

Photograph: Toussaint Kluiters

## US tobacco firm 'targeted children'

A new storm was breaking around the American tobacco industry yesterday following the release of internal documents from RJ Reynolds apparently showing how the company courted young teenagers to boost cigarette sales.

The papers, spanning 1973 to 1990, appear to contradict testimony given to the United States Congress by RJR executives three years ago in which they said under-18-year-olds had never been targeted. They could face perjury charges.

"If you are looking for a smoking gun regarding youth smoking, you need look no further," commented David Kessler, former head of the US Food and Drug Administration. Reacting to the papers, the White House asked Congress to move quickly to pass legislation authorising a litigation settlement struck by the tobacco companies and US states last

year. "The President finds the release of the documents in the tobacco case to be one more cause for urgency," it said.

Under the settlement, the tobacco companies would pay out \$368bn (£231bn) over 25 years and pledge to take action to reduce smoking levels among young people. In return, they would receive partial immunity from future suits.

The documents were released by Henry Waxman, a California congressman who has led the crusade against tobacco. "They targeted kids as young as 14," Mr Waxman said, adding that he would be pushing for perjury charges.

RJR has said the documents have been "cherry-picked" and taken out of context. It added that one mention of 14-year-olds was a typographical error and should have read 18-year-olds.

— David Usborne, New York

## Jospin offers race apology

Attempting to amend for a political faux pas, the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, said yesterday he would apologise to conservative MPs for comments linking the right to racism.

He said he would express his regrets during next week's question-and-answer session in parliament for comments he made on Wednesday, in which he said the right had opposed the abolition of slavery 150 years ago. Mr Jospin, under pressure for his failure to end protests by the unemployed, tried to play down his remarks at the Na-

tional Assembly. "It's really a parliamentary incident, of which there are many in a democracy," he said. "It shouldn't be dramatised. And as it's the first time, I intend that it will be the last."

Conservative MPs shook their fists and yelled at Mr Jospin after a fellow left-wing MP asked him to speak on the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. "One is certain the left was for the abolition of slavery, and you can't say the same for the right," said Mr Jospin.

— AP, Paris

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## Cook chides US for its hard line on Iran and Iraq

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, moved Britain's foreign policy several steps away from the United States yesterday, expressly differentiating Britain from the US in two key policy areas: Iraq and Iran. Mr Cook was making a flying – and heavily chaperoned – visit to Washington to launch Britain's presidency of the European Union. But his remarks were clearly intended also to burnish Britain's credentials among its European partners.

Mr Cook – who arrived a day later than planned and, at the Prime Minister's insistence, sans mistress – was on the first leg of a world tour designed to project Britain's simultaneous presidency of the European Union and chairmanship of the world's elite economic club, the Group of Seven industrialised nations.

Addressing a seminar on European-US relations before formal talks with his US counterpart, Madeleine Albright, Mr Cook

### RUSSIANS OFFER REPLACEMENTS IF IRAQ BANS AMERICAN RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT

The Russian defence minister, Igor Sergeev, yesterday offered Russian-made spy aircraft to replace American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft over Iraq if Baghdad banned US observation flights from its airspace.

"Our countries want the problems to be solved peacefully. If Iraq is against the U-2s, we can propose Russian-made planes that have the same performance as US aircraft, and that can be the start of a solution," Mr

Sergeev told a news conference held with the French defence minister, Alain Richard, on the first day of the Russian's three-day visit to France.

Iraq, which has triggered a new crisis in the United Nations Security Council by blocking a weapons inspection team headed by an American, has in the past threatened to shoot down US U-2 aircraft flying over its territory during such confrontations.

stressed Britain's solidarity and agreement with the US on many issues, including defence, Nato expansion and the continued international presence in Bosnia. But he also aligned Britain more closely with its European partners in several areas, implicitly chiding his hosts for their stance.

The most carefully worded, and perhaps least expected, of these departures related to Iraq. While noting that Britain had stood "four square" with the US in its determination "to take whatever action is necessary" to ensure Iraq's compliance with United Nations Security Council deci-

sions, Mr Cook said: "Equally, however, the Security Council must stand by its commitment that the sanctions are in place for specific purposes. There is light at the end of the tunnel for Iraq. Once Saddam complies fully with the Security Council's requirements on weapons of mass

destruction, then the council will need to take action on the oil embargo."

The term "light at the end of the tunnel" has been used by France and Iraq to argue that Baghdad should be given clear objectives, and preferably a timetable, for the lifting of the UN embargo. US statements have

been ambiguous, with some officials suggesting that the embargo will remain in force so long as Saddam is in power.

On Iran, Mr Cook was more forthright, describing it as "an issue where the US and the EU find it harder to see eye to eye" and lining Britain up firmly with Europe. "Isolating Iran," he said, "is not the right response". He warned that economic isolation would have no serious effect on Iran's attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. He also attacked US legislation that provides for sanctions on companies and third countries that trade with Iran and Libya. "We believe it is wrong in principle and counterproductive in its effect on Iranian politics," he said. "It has an extra-territorial impact on legitimate business which is unacceptable", and could only help Iran's "hawks".

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

## British firm told to quit Angola

Angola yesterday ordered all foreigners working for the London-based security company Defence Systems Limited, founded by former officers of Britain's elite Special Air Service, to leave the country immediately, a company official said.

DSL's chief executive, Richard Bethell, told clients, which include most foreign companies and embassies in Angola, in a letter on Wednesday to put in place security contingency plans.

The company official, who asked not to be named, said an aircraft was on standby in Johannesburg, awaiting clearance to land in Luanda to fetch the 103 foreigners, of whom 45 are Gurkhas from Nepal.

DSL was the largest private security firm in Angola, guarding top expatriate officials of most embassies as well as oil and mining companies.

There are over 90 security companies operating in Angola. "This is a nightmare, not only in terms of who will protect our houses and offices, but also for any foreign company planning to invest in Angola," a senior Western diplomat said.

The Angolan government issued a decree on 24 December ordering DSL's immediate expulsion, saying its operations were irregular. The government informed all expatriates working for the company to leave the country by yesterday morning.

The Interior Ministry said DSL, which operated as DSL Angola since 1992 when it became illegal for foreigners to own security companies in the country, had kept its top management exclusively for foreigners. Most foreign security companies in Angola have joint ventures with Angolan partners, usually army generals who are paid hefty dollar salaries.

— Reuters, Johannesburg



Blooded: Dan Mathews, an activist of the US group Peta, in a Milan boutique during men's fashion week, as campaigners protested against use of fur. Photograph: Reuters

## Pinochet still calling the shots

Old soldiers never die and some, such as Chile's Augusto Pinochet, refuse to fade away. The general, 82, who oversaw the death of 3,000 opponents over 17 years before handing over to a civilian government in 1990, is still calling the shots.

Due to retire as army commander this month, he has postponed his departure to an

unspecified date. Constitutionally, he can remain until 11 March but his view of the constitution is not necessarily that of our average democrat: he overthrew the elected Marxist government of Salvador Allende in 1973. And he pushed through a constitutional change which allows him to serve, without election, as a senator for life.

His pending switch from army chief, and still a powerful force behind the throne of President Eduardo Frei, to senator created uproar this week, including in parliament, which broke off in chaos. It was then that Gen Pinochet said he would prolong his army career.

— Phil Davison, Latin America Correspondent

THE INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENT

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The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants throughout January and February for £10

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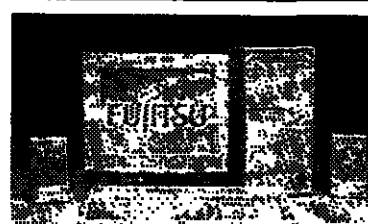
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## Remember Vukovar – for the sake of the dead, and the survivors who must bring it back to life

The communities shattered by the Balkan wars are slowly being put back together again. Croatia yesterday reoccupied Eastern Slavonia, an area taken by the Serbs in 1991 and then controlled for the last two years by the United Nations. Andrew Marshall looks back to the horrors of the war, and forward to a future that may also be bleak.

Remember Vukovar? It's one of those painfully angular Balkan names which for a few days or months became a headline during the wars of the first half of this decade. Then it faded away again, just a place on the map and a few curled newspaper cuttings.

Something similar has happened in the town itself. The ruins have softened over time, and undergrowth has hidden some of the worse scars. The shell-pocked buildings have settled into the rubble. It no longer has the appearance of atrocity; rather, of history. As you wander the streets of what was once a fine baroque Habsburg town, you can only guess about the buildings: School? Barracks? Town hall?

You can only guess, too, at the sufferings and the horrors that took place here, on the banks of the mighty and slow-moving Danube. For Vukovar was taken by the Serbs – local Serbs and the Yugoslav army – in 1991, after Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia. Eastern Slavonia was – is – a part of Croatia with a large Serb minority. Vukovar became a symbol for both sides: of Croatian resistance, and of Serb success. For three months it suffered under daily assault, millions of shells falling before the conquerors finally moved in in November.

One popular theory in Britain has it that the Balkan wars were ignited by Germany's decision to press for recognition of Croatia in December 1991. This would come as something of a surprise to the inhabitants of Vukovar. By the time European Union leaders had finished shuffling their papers in the Dutch town of Maastricht, the people of Vukovar – those that were still alive – had emerged from their cellars to find a town that had been levelled by Serb artillery. Then, the remaining houses were destroyed: a land mine in the living room, perhaps, or a tank shell through the front window. In some houses, the gas was turned on and a candle lit on the upstairs



Left: Vukovar residents with photographs of people who went missing after the city fell to Serb forces in the early stages of the Balkan wars. Now that it has reverted to Croatian control, there are fears of retribution

Photograph: PA

There are concerns about their safety, about their civil rights, and about their access to free media.

Franjo Tudjman, Croatia's President, remembers Vukovar well, and has used it to his advantage. It was a potent weapon during the presidential election last year, when Mr Tudjman took a "peace train" to Vukovar. The return of Eastern Slavonia is an important symbol for Croatia: five years after it was first recognised by the international community, all its land is under Croatian rule.

Western diplomats say that Croatia has been more emollient in recent months about the Serb minority. But the US – Croatia's main ally during the war – made clear yesterday that it is watching.

"We expect Croatia to fulfil its responsibilities to guarantee equal treatment and full protection of the rights of all Croatia's citizens," said President Bill Clinton. It remains to be seen if these pious hopes translate into reality.

If the West wants to remember Vukovar, then it has the tools. There will still be international monitors in Eastern Slavonia. Croatia wants good relations with, and eventual entry to, the European Union and Nato; there are plenty of levers. But Europe can remember Vukovar in other ways, too. The town is a ruin, and officials say it would cost some \$2.5bn (£1.56bn) to rebuild it to its pre-war splendour. Croatia can find \$1bn, but wants the rest to be donated by the international community. It is not much for a town that was destroyed while Europe waited on the sidelines.

landing. Some 200 people were taken from the hospital and murdered.

Yet as you drive through its eerie streets, each reduced to ruins no higher than a man can stand, there are houses that are virtually untouched. For Serbs lived in Vukovar, too. They were not spared the artillery assault, but their houses were left standing. The Catholic church is a ruin: the Orthodox church, though badly damaged and pocked with the ugly acne of shell fire, survives. When you first realise how completely this separation of man from man was done – the energy, the planning, the in-

tent, street by street, village by village – it is hard to keep your sanity.

Vukovar was not the only place where this happened, nor were the Croats the only ones to suffer. But it was one of the first casualties in a war to remove ethnic groups and change boundaries, to take down one flag and put up another. Croatia, in two lightning and deadly offensives, struck back at the Serbs in 1995, leaving Eastern Slavonia as the last under Serb control, expelling the Serbs and cleansing its own boundaries.

There is good news here, of a sort. East-

ern Slavonia has changed hands peacefully, after two years of UN supervision, unlike the Krajina, or Western Slavonia, where force of arms was the chosen route. "Two years ago few people believed this would be possible," said Bernard Miyet, UN Under-Secretary-General for peace-keeping operations yesterday.

But now the Russian soldiers crouched in their sandbagged positions on the main road are gone, and this is Croatia again: Croatian number plates, Croatian local authorities, Croatian money. There are 75-80,000 Croats waiting to move back, and

roughly the same number of Serbs still there, some living in what were Croat houses, waiting to see what will happen.

That is another reason to remember Vukovar. The Serbs in Eastern Slavonia, some of them refugees from the rest of Croatia, some of them long-term residents, fear for the future, and with justification. There will be revenge attacks.

There will be hatred, and the settling of scores. And there will also (if the evidence of the past is anything to go by) be precious little effort by the Croatian government to make these people want to stay.

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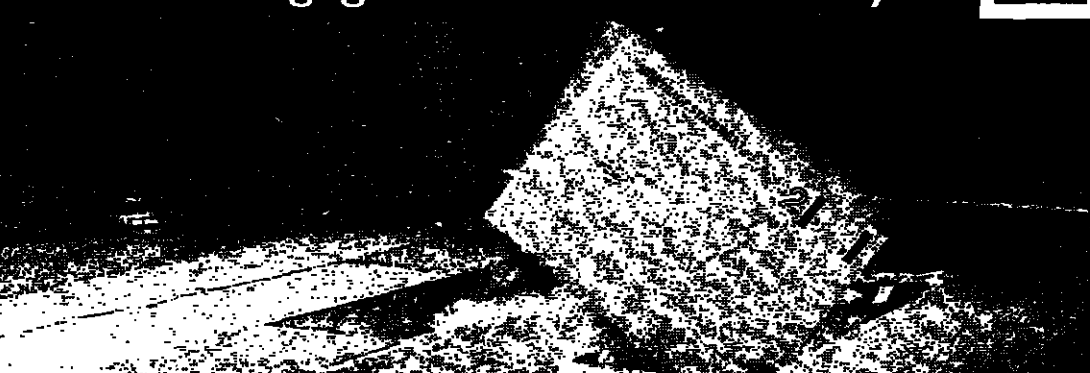
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# 16/INDIA'S ELECTION



Family fortunes: Sonia Gandhi at yesterday's rally in Bangalore, where her reference to the Bofors scandal electrified the crowd. Photograph: Reuters

## Sonia reels in the crowds for Congress

In the software city of Bangalore, Sonia Gandhi launched her campaign for India's Congress Party in earnest yesterday. And for the first time she demonstrated her power as a crowd puller.

What is the point of Sonia Gandhi throwing herself into the Indian election campaign? The point is to reanimate the great electorate of Indian politics that Congress used to be, to reawaken the memory among India's poor of the all-embracing paternalism of Congress in its glory days, and bring back like so many iron filings, all those who have drifted off to other parties. That was how one senior Congress figure put it to me in Bangalore this afternoon as Mrs Gandhi's campaign got under way in earnest.

Her first meeting last Sunday was just a foretaste, a necessary genuflection at the gate of martyrdom. But Congress support in Tamil Nadu long ago withered away beyond revival

and the meagre crowd which gathered at the place of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination had an unmistakable bused-in look.

So here in the "Garden City" in Karnataka state, where Congress is still a force, she faced her first important test. Outside Congress headquarters tribal drummers banged away while apatchicks in white homespun *kurtas* and *pajamas* milled about busily inside. The town, the most fashionable and one of the most prosperous in the country, was draped in welcome banners, lurid pink and mauve paintings of "Madam" that did her no favours, signs reading "We are honoured to have our charismatic presence

they were expecting 400,000. At 4pm, when Sonia arrived, nearly an hour late, there might have been 60,000. It was certainly a healthy number, and though brought in *en masse* there was electricity in the air. Then a cute showbiz touch, pure Bollywood: a helicopter flew over, showering the audience in jasmine and marigold petals.

But Sonia opened her mouth, and the voltage fell away. If she was really one of nature's orators, it probably wouldn't have taken Congress seven years to get her to make her maiden campaign speech. She had all the *elan* and charisma of a woman reading the lesson at Mass because it was her turn again. The greeting (in Kannada, the local language) went down a storm. After that, for half an hour, there was a distinct sense of 60,000 people studying their cuticles. The name "Indira" woke them up briefly. She tramped across the ground she covered earlier in the week: her private grief, the country's need, the threat of diversity, the nation's potential, Congress's achievements.

Then almost at the end she did it: mentioned the taboo word "Bofors". Sonia has been entangled - Rajiv too, while he lived - since the mid-1980s in allegations of corruption concerning an enormous arms deal with the Swedish firm, Bofors. The scandal has dogged Sonia's heels, without ever coming out and mugging her. Today, against all expectation, she rounded on it. "The full truth [about the scandal] has yet to be revealed. I have often wondered why. Tell us, Tell us, tell us", she cried. "I will be the happiest person if only they name the people responsible. Because on that day my husband will be vindicated. Because it will be proved" - now her voice rose and cracked with emotion - "that the case was nothing but a vicious attempt to destroy his reputation."

At last, as the speech ended, she had done it, she had reconnected the audience to the mains, and the translation of her (English) words was greeted with whistles and cheers.

It is not surprising that the one subject on which Sonia Gandhi shows real passion concerns her private hurt and bitterness. But it will be interesting to discover how galvanic such emotion can be across India. For there can be few countries where cynicism about politicians is more deeply ingrained, and the Gandhis are not exempt.

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# 17/HEALTH NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT  
FRIDAY 16 JANUARY 1998  
17

## White consultants get more merit awards

The NHS will spend nearly £1bn over the next five years on distinction awards for hospital consultants which can double their salaries to £110,000 a year. Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, says ministers are to re-examine the system which has been criticised for being unfair, inequitable and poor value for money.

White consultants are three times more likely to get a distinction award than non-white ones, says a study. The racial bias, revealed in an analysis of the 2,500 awards currently held by doctors worth between £22,590 and £53,645 on top of basic NHS salaries, is the latest charge to be made against the scheme which has been plagued by controversy since its inception. Ministers are believed to be unhappy with the arrangements for rewarding consultants and want to see the scheme re-worked to reflect not only the national and international recognition they have received, but also the contribution they

make to the NHS. Many top consultants with awards have thriving private practices and other commitments which take them away from the NHS. A spokesman for the Health Department said yesterday: "Large sums of money are paid out every year in distinction awards and ministers want to make sure it is in line with departmental policy. They have no plans to change it but they are looking at it as part of the comprehensive spending review." Basic salaries for full time hospital consultants range between £43,750 and £53,645. With a B, A or A+ award they can almost double their salaries

to a maximum of £110,000. A+ awards are currently held by 213 consultants and the total cost of the scheme to the NHS is estimated at £185m a year. The awards were established in 1948, at the start of the NHS, to recognise "more than ordinary ability and effort" and to ensure that the financial rewards at the top were sufficient to attract the most able practitioners into specialist areas. They are made by a national committee, mainly of doctors, which considers names put forward locally. The latest study of the scheme, published in the *British Medical Journal*, found 14 per cent of consultants are non-

white but only 5 per cent hold a distinction award. Dr Sam Everington, an author of the study and a former Labour Party adviser on health, said the findings illustrated the system's failings. "It is ludicrous that this money is not used to reward consultants who do more for the NHS." Previous studies have shown men are more likely to receive an award than women, the specialties of cardiology and surgery are favoured over psychiatry and geriatrics, and academics in teaching hospitals get more awards than ordinary working doctors in district hospitals. The awards are given "sole-

ly on grounds of merit but... they are not intended - nor should they be seen - as a measure of the quality of treatment afforded to individual patients." This curious caution is intended to prevent their being used to construct league tables of the best doctors. In an editorial in the *BMJ*, Dr Peter Rubin, dean of medicine at Nottingham University, says the mystery surrounding the awards should be dispelled. "A more explicit statement of the minimum requirements for each level of award could be helpful as would an indication of the relative importance of different professional achievements," he says.

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Flower power: Plants like the bluebell have the ability to synthesise exotic molecules which would take chemists years to copy

Photograph: Philip Dunn/Rex

## Bluebells: the natural way to fight Aids and cancer

Treatments for HIV infection and cancer could be developed from the humble bluebell after a government scientific body joined forces with a drugs company yesterday to spearhead research. Scientists at an institute in Wales have shown that bluebells, and their close relation the harebell, are packed with chemicals which they use as a defence mechanism against animals and insect pests. The biologically active compounds are strikingly like two similar compounds extracted from a plant in Australia and America which are now undergoing clinical trials with cancer and HIV patients in the US. Dr Alison Watson, of the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER) in Aberystwyth, Dyfed, said: "The bluebell produces compounds very similar to

them. They are not identical, but similar enough to get us excited." They all work by inhibiting certain enzymes in the body. The institute, which is part of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, yesterday announced an alliance with Xenova Discovery Limited to build up a library of such potentially money-spinning compounds. They aim to apply new analytical techniques to the search for previously unknown bioactive compounds from both European and tropical plants. However, it may prove impossible for the development to be wholly high-tech. Dr Watson said they might be dependent on whole fields of the flowers being grown for their commercial value. "Some of these compounds are very difficult to produce synthetically, so you have to farm the plants. They

could certainly be very pretty." The bluebell is not the only plant being investigated. But IGER and Xenova, which specialises in the discovery of novel pharmaceutical drugs from natural sources such as fungi, were keeping quiet yesterday about the possibilities of other flowers. Professor Clive Loveday, one of Britain's leading Aids experts, who has an interest in herbal medicines, said he was not surprised by the potential for the bluebell. "Just like humans, plants have an immune system and it's the chemicals they use to defend themselves that have these medical applications," he said. "Plants have the ability to synthesise extremely exotic molecules which would take chemists years to copy, if they could ever do it at all."

— Louise Jury

## Duvets raise cot death risk

Duvets and quilts should not be used for babies under the age of one year because of the risk that they will cover their faces and obstruct their breathing, doctors warn. A study of 100 families of babies who died from cot death found that the use of a duvet or bed quilt increased threefold the risk of the baby dying. The increased risk applied only if the baby slept on its back - the recommended position - or side, and not when it slept on its front. The authors of the study, which was conducted in Tasmania and is published in the *British Medical Journal*, say that when babies reach the age of 10 weeks they can pull bedclothes over their faces and may move their sleeping position. Duvets do not tuck in whereas blankets, which do and are therefore secured,

are less likely to be pulled over the face. Parents have been advised to put their babies to sleep on their backs since the start of the decade and the number of cot deaths has more than halved. Tucking them into bed with blankets rather than laying a duvet over them further reduces the risk during the vulnerable first year.

— Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor

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LYTTLE

This is no pigment of the imagination. The other half are plainly – and playfully – thinking pink again. So: what are we going to do about it?

One hates to be the bearer of bad tidings, but the evidence is clear. The breeders want pink – our colour! – back. Read it and sleep: Baby Spice in her mocking baby dolls; Boots No 7's current parody campaign ("Pink girls flirt with everyone, pay attention to no one – pink girls get what they want"). Pink ribbons for breast cancer awareness. Pink all over the cover of *Fat and Proud: The Politics of Size*. Even Aerosmith – Aerosmith! – have got into the act, singing the praises of pink on their latest waxing. That's pink as in "Surrender the pink", a punning reference to ... Well, never mind.

I could go on, but does any person of taste really want to be reminded of last year's summer collections, or the colour scheme of Julie Burchill's Brighton pad?

This is no pigment of the imagination. The other half are plainly – and playfully – thinking pink again. So: what are we going to do about it?

I find myself agreeing with Derek Bentley. Let 'em have it. Now, now. Please. Tossing your sex toys at me does nothing except add to my collection. I'm also aware that no hue is afforded permanent stability of meaning. Why, according to Cassell's *Queer Companion*, before the First World War pink was even considered a shade masculine. Being a variation on red (valour, courage), pink was linked with boys, not Boyz: with blood and the spilling of blood. Back then, blue was feminine, and our sort, like Disney's *Pocahontas*, painted with all the colours of the wind. Or at least three: green, violet, lavender. Suits you, sir, but not, definitely not, for public consumption.

Times change. Indeed

they do. Pink was Shocking. Pink was Hot. Pink was perky and perry. But now, after 30 years of that crazy little thing called Out, shouldn't we pause and ask: is a pastel that plays best on suckling pigs really the right shade for a mature political movement?

Sure, pink used to be provocative. Smart idea, inverting the symbol of our supposed deviancy and making it our own: the pink triangle. Insignificant Others were forced to wear in the concentration camps (Oh, those waggish Nazis! They knew it clashed with everything!) Anyhow, you understand: from Triumph of the Will to Triumph of the Willie.

Times change. Hang on to pink, and it's horribly possible to end up the spiritual counterpart of Barbara Cartland.

Pink, after all, is also being eroded from "within". Red, red ribbons and rainbow flags certainly suggest a wish to broaden a restricted palette. Honestly. Here we are, the mavens of mix 'n' match, and we're stuck with any colour as long as it's you-know-what. Pink pounds, pink politics, pink taxis, pink paperbacks. Pink accountants. Pink lawyers. The pink (showbiz) squares in *Trivial Pursuit*. From the concentration camps to questions about *Schindler's List*. There's even, for heaven's sake, a Pink Paper.

Times change. Face the future. (Orange – good news for Judith Chalmers.) At this stage we'd be better off with Khmer Rouge. There's no threat, no juice, no joy left in pink. Besides, I look vile in it. Apart from bridesmaids and Barbie, everyone does. But your lashes at any Gay Pride march for confirmation and consider the virtues of rebranding. It worked for Pepsi, it can work for us. We're no longer content to settle for the perception of being second best. The millennium approaches and ...

It's time to give pink back to blanchange, your incontinent Granny's matinee jacket, babies' squeezable little cheeks (both sets).

Pink is done. How can one tell? Because heterosexuals' parodies and satires are so much more pointed, so much more amusing than ours. So, can we just, like, get over it, and muse upon being all white on the night, or being in the navy, or going through the rainbow rather than over it? There may be no cure for this colour-blindness, but couldn't we at least admit that it's sometimes best to be out of the pink, rather than in?

## That little problem a man won't talk about – even if he's your doctor

Millions of men suffer from impotence, but a new survey suggests that even those who summon up the courage to see their GP may receive no help. Phillip Hodson reports.

The poet John Betjeman suffered: "My sex is no longer rampant." Sir Anthony Buck apparently suffered: "It took two years for the marriage to be consummated to wife Bienvenida." Even James Bond has suffered: "For an hour in that room alone with Le Chiffre the certainty of impotence had been beaten into him and a scar had been left that could only be healed by experience."

A pity they didn't live to see the current trend of impotence research and development.

This should be an exciting time for erections. There is a range of new products – at least one of them available on the NHS – or in the pipeline, to help most men. However, the conclusion of a survey of 432 patients and 194 partners, published on behalf of the Impotence Association, is significantly deflating.

The chairman of the association, Dr Alan J Riley, has estimated that up to 5 million British men suffer from some form of "erectile dysfunction" yet only 10 per cent receive any form of treatment.

We now learn that of those seeking help, one in four neglects to visit their doctor, preferring to trust to commercial alternatives such as sprays, herbs and "energy rings". Of those who do visit the surgery, 23 per cent go no treatment whatsoever. Of those who do visit the doctor and get treatment, a massive 58 per cent come away dissatisfied.

Does this matter? Well, 62 per cent of sufferers reported lowered self-esteem and some feelings of depression; 15 per cent had trouble making new relationships; 14 per cent said impotence had damaged their long-term partnerships; 10 per cent thought it had even spoiled their relationship with the doctor, while a quarter of the respondents said impotence reduced their overall quality of life by up to 80 per cent.

Allan Bennett – in his 50s – wrote to me last year to express frustration with the system: "I



have had sexual difficulties for more than two years. Reluctantly, I went to see my GP having finally plucked up the courage. He asked me what I expected at my age, and did it really matter any more? I'd got my family, hadn't I? And with a magisterial wave he dismissed my concerns.

"I was so flabbergasted, I remained speechless. The doctor in question, I may add, is a Roman Catholic."

"It was only when I got home that my brain jogged

back into gear. I sent him the following note:

"Dear Doctor:  
"I know that you have indicated that the virility problem is not of fundamental importance to the continuation of my marriage but I can assure you that it most definitely is vital to the continued existence of my peace of mind as a man. I thought you should be informed I shall be seeing a sexual consultant in London ..."

When you consider that good sex adds years to the life

of middle-aged men such as Allan, cutting the risk of premature death by as much as 36 per cent ("The truth about sex: more of it makes you live longer", *The Independent*, 19 December 1997), this does amount to a legitimate health concern.

Yet time and again, for reasons of embarrassment or lack of empathy, GPs seem reluctant to be proactive or to prescribe. And as the survey suggests, patients are equally slow to face up to their difficulties, often suf-

fering in silence as only "real" men can.

In fact, if the male sex were quoted on the stock exchange, today's price would be in trouble again. Poor educational attainments and falling sperm counts are one thing. But to pass up a National Health aphrodisiac when it is lawful and licensed seems more than perverse.

As men live longer, compete with women harder and consume more health and grooming products, impotence is, in any case, set to spread rather than diminish. Up to a third of men over the age of 45 experience some symptoms of impotence, and up to two-thirds of those aged 75 and over. Longer life span usually means more heart and hypertension problems. These may cause impotence directly, or as a result of taking medication for the conditions. The same is true of depression – a common enough feature of mid-life crisis. Both the illness, and remedies such as Prozac, can reduce libido and affect sexual performance. New drugs to counteract baldness, such as Propecia, also carry some risk of impotence.

Nor do "old" drugs such as alcohol and nicotine help. Men who consume more than 40 units of booze a week are likely to deliver little or no sexual thrill. It has been shown that smoking two high-tar cigarettes, one after the other, reduces blood-flow in the penis by about a third. And the *Independent* on Sunday's campaign to promote cannabis has to answer concerns that up to 20 per cent of long-term cannabis users may become impotent.

Even if you are trying to lead a drug-free, well-exercised lifestyle, there is little prospect of escape. The latest significant cause of impotence among younger men turns out to be "bicycle-riding", at least according to Dr Irwin Goldstein of Dallas, Texas (his website: <http://www.nd.edu/~ktremba/www-bike/BCY/men.bikes.html>), who sees six such patients a week. He claims that hard cycle-saddles on sports bikes are responsible for reducing penile blood flow by up to 66 per cent, and even the softer versions reduce blood supply to the region by a third.

So it is just as well that we live in a period replete with remedies. Injectable prostaglandins (blood-stream messengers) such as Caverject are

a special boon for diabetes and stroke patients. Men cross their legs when you mention injections, but the sensation is said to be no more than a "small prick", according to Dr Geoff Hackett of Keele University, who ran tests for five years.

To those critics who say doctors are yet again "interfering with nature", he replied: "Spontaneous intercourse isn't very common in most 20-year-old marriages. My studies show that 39 per cent of patients with diabetes are permanently impotent. Over 50 per cent of stroke patients are impotent. And most of those with spinal damage who can't walk and have sometimes little else to live for are impotent. Not only will many of these sufferers be able to resume sexual activity, the quality of their erections is likely to exceed anything they've experienced since boyhood."

Another version of this compound (called Muse) will be available later this month in pellet form for needle-phobes.

In addition to these treatments, there is a vast array of hard or semi-hard penile rods and implants, some with external bulb-inflators, which may be fitted by a plastic surgeon, in addition to hand-applied pumps, splints and bands.

But in all this discussion of prosthetics and sexual chemistry where is the human touch?

Already we have a consumer-friendly alpha-1 blocker impotence remedy (called Erecnos) which, unlike Caverject and Muse, does not induce erection in the absence of sexual stimulation. We're about to see an orally-active compound (Sildenafil) whose trials are showing great success.

But popping a pill is never going to be the complete answer. Men, after all, are only half the equation. We already know that more than a third of the partners of impotent men have sexual problems of their own. So, despite the problems highlighted in this survey, the future still looks good for talking treatments and Relate; it is also looking good for foreplay.

Phillip Hodson is a trustee of the Impotence Association, a sex therapist and a fellow of the British Association for Counselling. The results of the survey will be published in full on 28 January. To contact the Impotence Association, write to PO Box 10296, London SW17 7ZN.

## Opening doors on a private drama

They are two very different women, but they share painful personal experience of eating disorders. Between them they provide as comprehensive and provocative an insight into the subject as you are likely to get, says Angela Neustatter.

All the statistics told Peggy Claude-Pierre that her daughter Nikki, skeletal and suicidal, would be lucky to live another three days. It was at this point that she wondered whether she had the physical stamina to cope: "I think it is lucky I didn't live in the US, where I could have got a handgun."

She had already lived through a year of her eldest daughter Kirsten's life-threatening anorexia, had managed with 24-hour caring and a constant countering of the negative feelings, self-loathing of her body and herself that Kirsten had voiced, to bring her back to health and rationality. Three months later she realised that Nicole, in her mid-teens, was showing signs of an eating disorder. "I began having an unhealthy fear about her," says Claude-Pierre. "I knew intuitively, although I tried to deny it. And Nikki's illness was a nightmare, many times worse than Kirsten's had been."

She sits now at a table overlooking the rooftops of London, recalling the nights she sat on the bathroom floor beside her daughter Nikki's bedroom, will-



Inside stories: Peggy Claude-Pierre and Marya Hornbacher



Photographs: Rui Xavier; Mark Trockman

ing the icy cold of the stone to keep her awake because she feared that if she slept and left her daughter alone, "her life could slip away". During the day she drove Nikki around as a distraction, stopping regularly at restaurants to say she was hungry, then putting scraps of food from her plate on to the table in the hope that Nikki might take them. There was the evening they scoured town for a banana because Nikki decided this was what she wanted, but she would only accept an over-ripe one, where just a fraction of the fruit was edible.

Claude-Pierre acknowledges: "I was held an emotional hostage", but something in her "knew" that the only way to get her daughter through was with unconditional approval and

love. "At the same time, to do this I had to detach myself emotionally, because she would sometimes spit hate and vitriol at me." She stayed with Nicole 24 hours a day, chatting to her by day, sitting by her bed at night recalling happy memories – anything to prevent the negative thoughts that she believes drive those with eating disorders ever farther and farther into their private despair.

And it is history now. After 18 months Nikki was cured, and what Claude-Pierre learnt convinced her that much of what is commonly presumed about eating disorders is mistaken or superficial. She dismisses the idea that the ending of her marriage, shortly before her daughter's illnesses, was a cause. She does not believe coercive treat-

ments and rigid regimes work, and her conviction led to the setting up of the Montreux Clinic in Canada. This now famous place, which has treated hundreds of people with eating disorders, is also the subject of Claude-Pierre's new book.

Predictably, there have been sceptically raised eyebrows at her relentless rebuttal of medical theories. Claude-Pierre's soft, coaxing voice does not fully disguise a steely, driven quality, the thing you imagine made it possible for her to stay sane through two-and-a-half-years of her children's living death. She says that in four years of monitoring patients who complete the treatment, there has not been one relapse. But she will not give figures, and slides quickly on to other matters.

The single hardest thing, Claude-Pierre acknowledges, was the "mystery" of what went on inside the head of an anorexic – and that is precisely what Marya Hornbacher brings us in her book *Wasted*, the extraordinary diary of a 23-year-old bulimic who gives us in intimate, infinite detail the growth of self-loathing and alienation, how her parents used her as a football in their dreadful marriage, and the process of starvation and sickness. Hornbacher provides the missing link in Claude-Pierre's work, an insight, in prose as harshly illuminating as neon, of how easily it all begins: "One minute I was your average nine-year-old in shorts and a T-shirt munching on a bag of Fritos. Stuffed full, I went to the bathroom and made myself

vomit. When I returned everything was calm and I felt very clean."

There followed "15 years of bingeing, barfing, starving, needles and tubes and terror and rage, and medical crises and personal failure." Yet, although it is this very negativism for which Claude-Pierre believes she has a panacea, you wonder whether Hornbacher, whose book is underscored with a dogged, infantile cry of "won't ... can't ..." would be too great a challenge. For it is this obduracy, willingness to die rather than be treated, that makes the medical profession say cure is impossible; at best you can manage the illness. Hornbacher pins the dilemma neatly when she says: "Dying is exciting. Eating disorders provide a private drama."

But Hornbacher is no longer starving herself to death, although she absolutely refutes the idea of cure: "I do not have a happy ending ... I cannot end it with assurances of my own Triumph over Adversity."

And although Hornbacher is closer than Claude-Pierre to the cynics who are unconvinced by the idea of a softly-softer, love and comfort cure, the two women have converged in that Kirsten and Nicole are cured and, 10 years on, are working at their mother's clinic. And Hornbacher, now 23, is at least healthy and distanced enough to have written her life story.

*The Secret Language of Eating Disorders* (Doubleday, £16.99). *Wasted* will be published by HarperCollins on 6 April, at £12.99.

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## Roger Clark

Roger Albert Clark, rally driver, born Narborough, Leicestershire 5 August 1939; MBE 1979; married 1965; Judith Barr (two sons); died Leicester 12 January 1998.

Roger Clark, a legendary character in the world of rallying, was Britain's most successful driver in the 1960s and 1970s. Many think him the best of all time. Although justly famous for twice winning Britain's RAC International Rally in Ford Escorts - in 1972 (with Tony Mason as his co-driver) and in 1976 (with Stuart Pegg) - in a glittering career he won 25 other major international rallies, in Britain, Europe, Canada, and South Africa. For two decades he was not only the best of British, but was widely respected by rivals all over the world.

Once he was established in "works" teams in the mid-1960s, his flamboyant driving and his refusal to be overruled by any event, car or rival, changed the face of British rallying. Before this time British stars, in general, had been well-to-do motor traders, not used to loose surfaces and aggressive competition from Scandinavians. Clark, by contrast, was young, fit, well-balanced and skilful on all surfaces - and not at all impressed by any other driver. Not that he ever knew - or

cared about - the origin of his superlative talents, which he accepted as there, built-in and supreme. He often said, at the chat shows and interviews he so readily gave: "I don't care how sideways I am. As long as I'm not actually looking out of the back window at the time, I should be able to get it all back into line."

In sport, and in most things which ever attracted his attention, he usually took the simple approach, yet far too many people missed the deep thinker hidden away behind the affable front. Analysts trying to dig deeper were airily dismissed, for throughout his career Clark took a straightforward view of what life, and competition motoring, had to offer. Weight training, or any vigorous exercise, was anathema to him. As he freely admitted: "All the exercise I need is to walk down to the pub from home" - he was certainly more at home close to a bar than to a gymnasium.

Clark was born just before the Second World War in Leicestershire, where his father ran a small garage business. By the late 1950s, when he left Hinckley Grammar School with five O levels, but with much more interest in sport, the business had taken on several new car franchises. With his brother Stan, he then joined the family business which would be his

sheet anchor for 30 years. Starting at the bottom, with oily hands and a growing knowledge of the workings of the motor car, he took up motorsport in cars best described as old bangers, but then shot to fame in British club rallies with a BMC Mini Cooper. He forged, too, a long-time partnership with Jim Porter, who stayed on as his co-driver for 20 years. Bizarrely, though, Porter did not share in either of his RAC Rally wins: he was working for the organisers on both events.

Except for one category success (in a Rover 2000) in the 1965 Monte Carlo Rally, his early "works" drives were unsuccessful, but after he joined Ford (his first full season being in 1966), his sheer driving pace, and ability, were obvious.

Clark, Ford and (from 1968) the fastest special-engined Ford Escorts were inseparable until the end of 1979 and even in the 1980s (when his factory-backed career was over) he would still take every opportunity of driving one again. When the London-Sydney Marathon "retrospective", for classic cars, was held in the early 1990s, it was the Clark/Escort combination which set almost every fastest time.

Throughout the 1970s he was a permanent, and much-admired, member of the celebrated Ford factory rally team, usually driving Escorts, but

sometimes testing or campaigning strange models to which the bosses had taken a fancy. Sometimes his chances of success - in a Zodiac (in Eastern Europe) or a Capri (in the Tour of Britain) - were remote, but he never complained: "It's always exciting, and I'm getting paid to go mad in someone else's car. It beats working!"

His best was always wondrous to watch, on any surface, but he was at his most spectacular on loose surfaces, where he could use the Escort's finely balanced handling to get the car sliding sideways, and able to "dance" to his command. No other British driver could match these skills, for when in his prime Clark was the equal of world-class Scandinavians like Hannu Mikkola and Bjorn Waldegard. Not for nothing was his best-selling 1976 autobiography (which I helped him to write) entitled *Sideways... to Victory*.

When not rallying, which was rarely, he helped run the expanding family businesses in the Leicester area, and opened Roger Clark Cars in Narborough in the 1970s. Hit hard by the collapse of the economy in 1990, these had to close down, but in his final years, even though in precarious health, he set up Roger Clark Motor Sport, which prepared cars for others to use in rallying.

- Graham Robson



Clark: 'I don't care how sideways I am'

## Professor C. J. F. Dowsett

Charles James Frank Dowsett (Charles Downing), Armenian scholar, born London 2 January 1924; Lecturer in Armenian, School of Oriental and African Studies, London 1954-65; Reader 1965; Calouste Gulbenkian Professor of Armenian Studies, Oxford University 1965-91 (Emeritus); Fellow, Pembroke College, Oxford 1965-91 (Emeritus); FBA 1977; married 1949 Friedel Lapuner (died 1984); died Oxford 8 January 1998.

C. J. F. Dowsett was not only for 26 years Calouste Gulbenkian Professor of Armenian Studies at Oxford University but also, as "Charles Downing", the children's author of the delightful retold *Tales of the Hodja* (1964, illustrated by the Greek cartoonist Pappas) and the collections *Russian Tales and Legends* (1956) and *Armenian Folktales and Fables* (1972).

He was a man of exceptional ability and versatility. His total lack of pretension, his ever-wonderful sense of enquiry and his playful delight in the quirks of language meant, however, that one was never overwhelmed by his immense learning and extraordinarily wide range of reading. It is not surprising that he had a wonderful rapport with children.

At Peterhouse, Cambridge, from 1947 to 1950, Dowsett changed to Comparative Philology for Part II of the Tripos after reading Russian and German for Part I. This happily brought him into contact with Professor

(later Sir) Harold Bailey, who first introduced him to Armenian. Bailey, who was a scholar with a phenomenal knowledge of Indo-European (and many other) languages, was to remain a lifelong friend, and in honour of his 90th birthday in 1989 Dowsett presented him with an Armenian ode, composed and beautifully illuminated by himself.

After a period of further study in Paris, where he gained diplomas in both Armenian and Georgian, he was appointed in 1954 to a new Lectureship in Armenian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. This was the only post in the subject in Britain; so, when the Calouste Gulbenkian Chair of Armenian Studies was established in Oxford in 1965, Dowsett was the obvious candidate.

At Oxford, where the Chair is associated with a Fellowship at Pembroke College, Dowsett had a small but steady stream of students, mostly graduates, many of whom are now distinguished scholars teaching in universities in both Europe and North America. His graduate classes were not exactly conventional, and might well have nonplussed today's Teaching Quality Assessors. Barely would a line or two of text have been read before some etymological puzzle would emerge, and then each member of the class would be directed to a different dictionary in the subsequent chase for cognates.

The dictionaries might be of anything from Old Irish to Albanian - all were conveniently present on his crowded bookshelves. Roman etymologies were a particular favourite. At the end of the class, although

there might have been no great progress in reading the Armenian text of the day, one nevertheless went away with one's intellectual horizons not a little broadened, and with an exhilarating sense of excitement.

Dowsett had a gift for inspiring his students, and this is the essential quality which makes for a real teacher. Some students, of course, anxious just to complete a text in a minimum of time, found this method of teaching frustrating, but those who persevered soon discovered the experience to be both enriching and unforgettable.

Students were privileged to enjoy the wonderful warmth and hospitality of his home, where Friedel (née Lapuner), whom he married in 1949, would provide for them memorable meals. After her premature death in 1984, this tradition of hospitality was in due course revived, in her own distinctive style, by Ani Küpper, especially after Dowsett was compelled, by increasing immobility in one leg, to teach at home.

His earlier academic publications include an annotated translation of Movses Daskhurantsi's *History of the Caucasian Albanians* (1961) and an edition and translation of the 12th-century *Penitential of David of Gandzak* (1961). Subsequently he collaborated with John Curran in the publication of the *Kühahya Armenian Tiles* (glazed tiles in the Armenian Cathedral, Jerusalem), Dowsett being responsible for the volume dealing with the Armenian inscriptions, *The Inscribed Tiles* (1972).

But his *magnum opus*, which fortunately saw publication some six months before his death, was a major study of the multilingual poet Sayat Nova (*Sayat Nova: an 18th-century troubadour*, 1997). Dowsett's wide range of linguistic abilities, combined with his deep love of poetry and music, made him the ideal person to write on this poet, who composed with equal facility in Armenian, Georgian, Azeri and Russian.

Inspired, perhaps, by Sayat



Dowsett inspiring

Nova's example, Charles Dowsett would, especially in his later years, every now and then send his friends a sheaf of his own multilingual poems, proverbs or limericks: written in an even wider range of languages, these were often illustrated, or even set to music, by himself. He was particularly proud that the *Times* had once published a poem of his written in Lithuanian, which he had composed in honour of some sporting event with Lithuanian participants.

His next projected book was to have been a study of Lithuanian wedding songs.

- Sebastian Brock

## Caroline Bingham

Caroline Margery Conyers Worsdell, historian and biographer, born York 7 February 1938; Research Fellow, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College 1985-87; married 1958 Andrew Bingham (one daughter; marriage dissolved 1972); died Caterham, Surrey 8 January 1998.

Caroline Bingham made her name as a historian and biographer with an interest in Scottish history. She never held, or wanted to hold, an academic post, preferring to retain her independence even if it entailed a measure of financial insecurity. Yet, although she wrote for the general reader rather than the specialist, when it came to her research and writing, she set herself the highest of standards. Her first published work, in 1968, was *The Making of a King: the early years of James VI*

and I, and she returned to this theme 10 years later with a two-volume study which covered James's rule in England as well as Scotland, *James VI of Scotland* (1979) and *James I of England* (1981). She thereby made a significant contribution to the re-evaluation of the first Stuart ruler of Great Britain, usually (and erroneously) dismissed as a windbag and poltroon.

Other works covered the entire spectrum of Scottish history, from the earliest times down to the Union, but Bingham also shifted her attention south of the border and wrote a life of Edward II (*The Life and Times of Edward II*, 1973) as well as *The Crowned Lions* (1978), which dealt with the early Plantagenet rulers of England. She resisted the temptation to add yet another biography of Mary, Queen of Scots to what is already a more than sufficient number. In *Darley* (1995), she preferred to bring out of the



Bingham: Scottish histories

shadows Mary's husband Lord Darley, a distinctly unattractive character, but one who, by virtue of his birth and marriage, was a person of consequence.

She was born Caroline Worsdell, in 1938, from a Quaker family, she later converted to Roman Catholicism. One of the factors which impelled her to take this step was the desire to get back behind the Refor-

mation and rejoin the historic Church. She was deeply attached to the Latin mass, which had its roots in the earliest centuries of Christianity, and felt betrayed when the modernisers turned their backs on the past and substituted vernacular versions lacking in both dignity and the authenticity which time alone can confer.

She was educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College and Bristol University, where she took an honours degree in History. Caroline Bingham derived great benefit, as well as enjoyment, from her undergraduate studies, and was therefore delighted to be asked in later years to write the centenary history of a pioneer institution in the field of women's education, the *History of Royal Holloway College 1886-1986* (1987). She was enchanted by this ebullient late-Victorian version of the Château de Chambord, crowning the heights above

Egham in Surrey, and much appreciated the award of a Jubilee Fellowship by the college in 1985. This gave her easy access to the archives as well as to students and staff, with whom she had warm and friendly relations.

The biography of Darley was Bingham's last published work and further cemented her reputation. By the time she finished it, she was suffering from renewed attacks of the cancer which eventually killed her, but she showed a determination worthy of her Quaker ancestors by completing a life of Robert the Bruce which will be a worthy memorial. She also, in her last months, achieved another ambition, that of reading the whole of Proust before she died.

Caroline Bingham never thrust herself forward and was inclined to understate her abilities. Yet an innate shyness did not prevent her from winning the love and admiration of a wide circle of friends, for she was not

only a woman of striking beauty and elegance but had an unaffected charm and sweetness of nature. Although she spent the greater part of her life in London, and relished visits to theatres, galleries and restaurants, she had a genuine love for the countryside. She also had a soft spot for animals, especially dogs.

Although she was caught up, as we all are, in secular affairs and the struggle to earn a living, she never lost sight of the spiritual realities behind the material world. In a lecture in 1986 on Thomas Holloway, the founder of the college which bears his name, she stressed that, whatever the appearances, he did not "lay waste his powers" and did not suffer from the atrophy of imagination and loss of ability to see visions which Wordsworth lamented as the cost of constant attention to mundane matters.

Bingham could have been writing about herself. It is a most appropriate epitaph.

- Roger Lockyer

## Rell Sunn

Rell Sunn, surfer, born Makaha, Oahu 1950; married Dave Parmenter (one daughter); died Makaha 2 January 1998.

Rell Sunn was the modern archetype of the Hawaiian water-woman. She was the female answer to Duke Kahanamoku, the mother of women's surfing in the 20th century.

She harked back to an ancient Hawaiian tradition, exemplified by such semi-legendary figures as Hina'ikamala and Kele'a who, in the era

before European contact, were reputed to be better surfers than men. When Captain Cook sailed into the islands for the first time, he noticed that men and women were equally adept in the field of water sports. The 19th-century evangelists soon put a stop to all such pagan pursuits. It was Sunn who put women back in the water.

Born in Makaha on the west side of Oahu, of a Chinese-Hawaiian family, she learned to surf at the age of four and first competed at 14. In the absence of a women's category, she would surf against men. She was

formative in the creation of a parallel women's circuit and helped establish the Women's Professional Surfing Association in 1975, in which she was briefly ranked world No 1. She became Hawaii's first female lifeguard and learnt to put up with some of the men she rescued running away in shock and humiliation at being saved by a woman.

Beyond her iconic status among surfing women - which earned her a place in the Surfing Walk of Fame in Huntington Beach, California - she also figured significantly in the Hawaiian cultural renaissance

of the last few decades. She crewed in the *Hokule'a*, the traditional double-hulled canoe that mirrored the migratory path of the vessels that brought the first Polynesians to Hawaii a millennium or so ago. And she developed a project enabling underprivileged children to sail around the islands and thereby acquire a sense of their Hawaiian identity. She also ran an annual Menchune (little people) Surf Meet and had the charisma and persuasiveness to set up sponsorships for up-and-coming young Hawaiians. She not only loved her sport,

but was gifted in communicating her passion to others, working as a surf reporter on KCCN radio and lyrically hymning the old wooden longboard in a Channel 4 documentary, *Walking on Water*. She put up a brave fight against cancer for 14 years, always maintaining that surfing was the best therapy. When she lost all her hair through chemotherapy, she wore a swimming cap on her first day back in the water, but felt deeply embarrassed in this most style-conscious of milieus. The next day the whole Makaha crew were wearing swimming caps too.

Brian Keaulana, a fellow lifeguard and now movie stuntman, said of her, "Rell was the greatest in surfing, swimming, sailing, spearfishing - but more than that, she was the embodiment of the *aloha* spirit."

Her ashes will be scattered tomorrow out on the lineup at her favourite break in Makaha. Sunn had expressed the wish that at her funeral mourners should not speak of her as passing on to a better place. "There's no better place than Makaha," she said. "This is heaven on earth."

- Andy Martin

## BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

**DEATHS**  
MATHESON: Jean Cecily Mary, on 14 January 1998, widow of Patrick Hugh Matheson and formerly Jan Keith Matheson, Funeral at St John's Church, Perthshire, at 2.30pm on Monday 19 January 1998.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, in Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 071-553 2002 (24-hour answering machine 071-553 2001) or faxed to 071-553 2000, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

The OBITUARIES e-mail address is [obituaries@independent.co.uk](mailto:obituaries@independent.co.uk). The independent's main switchboard number is 071-553 2000.

Changing of the Guard  
by Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment  
at the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards,  
Jan

## BIRTHDAYS

Mr Colin Banks, graphic designer, 66; Sir Alastair Blair, former Writer to the Signet, 90; Air Marshal Sir Robert Craven, 82; Sir Robin Dunn, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 80; Professor John Enderby, physicist, 67; Professor Roy Foster, Professor of Irish History, Oxford University, 49; The Right Rev Michael Henley, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, 68; Professor Sir Peter Hirsch, metallurgist, 73; Professor Elaine Murphy, psychoanalyst, 51; Mr Richard Ormond, Director, National Maritime Museum, 59; Miss Nadine Peppard, race relations consultant, 76; Mr Keith Shackleton, artist and naturalist, 75; Professor Sir Frederick Stewart, geologist, 82; Lord Thomson of Monifieth, former chairman of the IBA, 77; Mr Cliff Thorburn, snooker player, 50; Miss Christine Truman, tennis player, 57; Lady (Marina) Vaincy, art critic, 60; Professor Sir William Wade QC, former Master, Goosville and Caius, Cambridge, 80; Mr James Watson, chairman, Watson & Philip plc, 63; Mr Michael White, theatre and film producer, 62.

## Anniversaries

Births: Francis-Joseph Talma, actor-manager, 1763; André Michélin, tyre maker, 1853; Ethel Merman (Zimmerman), singer and actress, 1909. Deaths: Edmund Spenser, poet, 1599; Carol Lombard, actress, killed in an air crash 1942; Arturo

Toscanini, conductor, 1957; Robert Jemison Van de Graaff, nuclear physicist, 1967. On this day: Ivan the Terrible, first Russian Tsar, was crowned, 1547; the British expedition led by Ernest Shackleton reached the South Magnetic Pole, 1908; in the United States, the 18th Amendment was ratified, which prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages, 1920; the Gulf war started with the launch of Operation Storm, when allied air attacks were made on Iraq and occupied Kuwait, 1991. Today is the Feast Day of St Bernard and Others, St Fursy, St Henry of Cockst, St Honoratus of Arles, St Marcellus I, pope and St Priscilla.

## Lectures

National Gallery: Mari Griffith, "Courtauld Loans (1): Monet. The Seine at Argenteuil", 1pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Christine Riding, "Rococo and Chinoiserie", 2.30pm.

## Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 4.07pm. United Synagogue: 0181-343 8909. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-207 2243. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 071-580 1463. Reform Synagogue of Great Britain: 0181-349 4771. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 071-289 2573. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 071-528 1026.

## LAW REPORT: 16 JANUARY 1998

### Home Secretary could revoke leave to remain in UK

A grant of indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom under section 4(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 had to be "given" in writing to the person affected, and could accordingly be cancelled or revoked until it had been communicated.

Rafiq, Secretary of State for the Home Department, Court of Appeal, Lord Justice Hirst, Lord Justice Robert Walker and Mr Justice Hamman, 12 January, 1998.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal of Robina Rafiq against the decision of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal, which had reversed an Adjudicator's decision to allow her appeal against a deportation order.

The appellant, a Pakistani citizen, had applied for indefinite leave to remain as a

spouse. In May 1993 her passport was endorsed with a stamp signifying the grant of indefinite leave to remain, but the passport was not returned to her. In June 1993 the appellant and her husband separated, and in April 1994 the Home Secretary returned her passport, with the stamp granting indefinite leave to remain deleted as "endorsed in error". An accompanying letter notified her of the refusal of her application on the ground that her marriage was no longer subsisting.

Lord Justice Hirst said that the Adjudicator who had allowed the appellant's appeal

against the deportation order had held that the original endorsement in her passport was sufficient to satisfy the requirement in section 4(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 that the Home Secretary's power to give or vary leave to remain in the United Kingdom should be exercised by notice in writing given to the person affected, and that, in the absence of deception, that decision could not be revoked. He had also held that it was unreasonable for the Home Secretary to have retained the appellant's passport for almost a year, and that it was the function of the judiciary to protect the individual from the "unfettered power of the executive" to hold a person's passport indefinitely.

It had been submitted for the appellant that the stamp

of the passport was the clearest possible evidence of a decision to grant indefinite leave to remain, and of the actual grant of leave, which was irrevocable, and that all that was missing was the posting or handing over of the passport to its owner.

On behalf of the Home Secretary it had been submitted that the fallacy in that argument was that it accorded no weight to the word "given" in section 4(1), and that the process of exercising the power to grant leave was not complete until the decision had actually been communicated.

*Minton v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [1990] Imm LR 199 was authority for the proposition that the stamp in the passport was the manner in which the decision-making process was

exercised, but the ratio of the case was that an illegible stamp granting limited leave to remain did not constitute notice of the decision because it failed to communicate the duration of the leave granted.

For those reasons the appeal would be dismissed, but the case could not be left without the expression of considerable disquiet concerning the 11-month period during which the appellant's passport had been retained. There might have been grounds for a successful application for judicial review had such a case been mounted. Whilst the view of the Adjudicator in that context was understandable, it had not, however, been within his jurisdiction to set matters right on that ground.

- Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister



## The message from Dudley? Mr Blair still doesn't know what happens next



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As is so often the case, it was Paddy Ashdown who "won" this week's three-way tussle at Prime Minister's Question Time in the House of Commons. He commented that listening to Tony Blair and William Hague's exchanges on welfare reform was "rather like watching a lost edition of *Call My Bluff*". This was a strikingly apt analogy, because much of the confusion engendered by the fuss over welfare reform is to do with definitions. The late Frank Muir might have defined welfare as a medieval payment for drawing water. Today's contestants have two other, rival, definitions lurking at the back of their minds. There is welfare as in state, cradle to grave. British and a Good Thing, albeit somewhat old-fashioned. And there is welfare as in dependency, scroungers, American and a thoroughly Bad Thing.

It is too late to bemoan the Americanisation of this part of our language. Labour won the election on a platform which relied heavily on using the word welfare in this newer, transatlantic sense. One

central promise was to get people "off welfare and into work", a coded programme giving four specific options to a defined group of the unemployed. Another central promise was to "reform the welfare state", the objectives of which were, by contrast, entirely hazy. The only thing that it would not add to public spending – indeed, it would provide the framework within which spending on social security benefits would decline, as public investment in education increased.

Polly Toynbee pointed out in our pages yesterday that this was a dangerous promise, because it raised expectations on the right and fears on the left of big cuts in the social security budget which were unlikely to materialise. She is right: it is dangerous. That is why Mr Blair was back on the road again last night, in Dudley town hall, unfashionable heart of the real Britain which elected him. But we should applaud rather than criticise him for taking this particular risk. The welfare state

does indeed need a radical overhaul. It may be that this will not have a dramatic effect on the total budget, but the assumptions underlying state benefits and people's perceptions of them do desperately need to be shaken up and tested.

What is worrying is the half-baked and piecemeal way in which the Prime Minister has drifted into the "national debate" which he sought to launch last night. He gives every impression of having only the vaguest idea of the desirable end point of welfare reform. And the truth is that the debate launched itself without waiting for the synchronised spinners, and was launched by high-pitched controversy over precisely the wrong issues. Cutting lone parent benefit might conceivably have been a logical part of the later stages of reform, but it was only counter-productive and limiting to allow that furore to dominate the start of the process.

Likewise, it was misguided to try to introduce the concept of an "affluence test" last weekend – a test which, inci-

dentally, the cut in lone parent benefit would fail, and which confuses rather than clarifies the issues. It is well known that Frank Field, the John the Baptist of Blairite welfare reform, has always opposed means testing. His words were predictably thrown by the Conservatives at the Prime Minister on Wednesday: "Means tests penalise work, tax savings, and place a penalty on honesty."

To which the right response would have been: Yes they do, but there will always be a tension in the system between help for those in need and incentives for people to help themselves. The trick is to get the balance right, and at the moment the system is too much tilted towards putting people on benefit and keeping them there. Hence Mr Blair's sharp distinction last night between those who can work, who should, and those who cannot, who should be treated compassionately – within existing resources of course.

That is right; and if there is a pot of gold in welfare reform it must lie within

the £20bn paid each year in disability benefits. Sure, some categories of people who should have been getting help in 1979 were not getting help and now are not. A six-fold increase in sickness and disability? It does not inspire confidence that Labour has only just discovered this statistic.

The big question, though, is which Mr Blair was speaking in Dudley last night? Was it the breaker of the trade union block vote who knew precisely what he wanted but did not to spell it out for fear of provoking opposition? Or was it the Clause IV seat-of-pants-fitter, who tore up the old socialist creed without the slightest idea of the form of words which would replace it?

The last time he was in Dudley he was a salesman without a product, selling a new Clause IV that had not been written. That came right in the end, but this is bigger, more complicated and affects people's lives directly. We applaud Mr Blair's decision, at last, to lead. But we are not at all clear where he is heading.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

## LETTERS

### Battle for Bart's

Sir: In his report on the future of London's hospitals ("Bart's may still close", 13 January), Jeremy Laurance rightly draws attention to the inexcusable delay by the Government in publishing the recommendations of the London Strategic Review. The report by the independent panel was submitted to ministers in early November, and the uncertainty surrounding the future of world-class teaching hospitals such as Bart's and Guy's must come to an end, for the sake of patients and NHS staff.

If the review panel has not made any specific recommendations on whether Bart's should close or whether Guy's accident and emergency department should stay open, then ministers must make their own decisions in the light of the abundance of evidence available to them. This is a government that prides itself on its ability to make hard choices, and it is time to stop sitting on the fence. SIMON HUGHES MP (Southwark North and Bermondsey, Lib Dem) House of Commons

Sir: Jeremy Laurance reports that the consultant staff of the Royal Hospitals NHS Trust voted, in a ballot before Christmas, in favour of merging the trust's five hospitals at a single site, at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel.

That ballot was organised by the council of which I am chairman. It produced a substantial majority in favour of the single-site option, but only if it is of sufficient scale to support the current and predicted secondary and tertiary clinical workload. The definition of scale is where the debate hinges; it is not simply about the number of sites. Dr JOHN P MONSON Chairman, Joint Medical Council, Royal Hospitals Trust St Bartholomew's Hospital London EC1

Sir: The recent vote of the consultant staff at the Royal Hospitals NHS Trust's five sites (Bart's, Royal London, Mile End, London Chest and Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospitals), supported a single-site option only if clinical facilities and bed numbers were sufficient to support current and expected future levels of clinical activity.

This activity is understood by many of us to be far greater than that which can be achieved in a hospital of the proposed size

incorporating 1200-1300 beds at Whitechapel. Not only is London now no longer over-bedded, but indeed may be subject to severe bed shortages, particularly in areas of very heavy demand such as the East End.

The Trust's consultants further voted that were adequate facilities not available in the planned rebuild, then consideration should be given to the original two-site option, maintaining St Bartholomew's Hospital.

Only with the continuation of clinical activity at this hospital, which is currently thriving, will we have the resources and flexibility to provide first-rate health care to our local population. This will also allow us to maintain our excellence as a national and international centre. Professor ASHLEY GROSSMAN Chairman Dr DUNCAN DYMOND Dr JANE ANDERSON Deputy Chairmen Medical Council of St Bartholomew's Hospital

### Teachers were right

Sir: When the National Curriculum was introduced teachers were given an impossible task. When they complained they were denigrated by the politicians who invented a form of political police called the Office for Standards in Education to force schools and teachers into compliance. Teachers were condemned as inefficient, lazy and uncooperative, and schools were named and shamed. Mr Blunkett has now admitted that the National Curriculum was overburdened, misdirected and is in need of urgent change to make it manageable and effective ("Blunkett gives schools more time for three Rs", 14 January). Perhaps an apology is in order. PETER COLEMAN Headteacher Goodrich Primary School London SE22

Sir: The reason schools need to spend more time teaching chil-

dren to read is that they spend all their time at home watching television. Forget cannabis, tobacco, alcohol, lead in petrol. Television is the drug which has rotted all our minds. Education cannot compete. JOHN CAMPBELL London W11

### Pavement cyclists

Sir: While pavement cycling can present hazards to pedestrians, there are no reliable statistics to prove that it is as dangerous as is claimed. The figures cited in your article "£20 fines for Lycra louts" who pedal on pavement" (14 January) do not indicate where the collisions took place, or which party was at fault.

All the figures can tell us is that bikes pose less of a threat to pedestrians than cars do, as in the same period there were more than 35,000 reported collisions between cars and pedestrians. DANIEL JOHNSON London W1

Sir: As the recent recipient of a nine-stitch head-wound caused by a pedestrian lurching into the road in front of me without looking, I wonder whether you are able to redress the balance by quoting figures for cyclists killed or hurt by pedestrians. The level of danger on the roads we cyclists choose daily to face makes us more "Lycra loonies" than "Lycra louts", I fear. PETER JEFFRIES Chatham, Kent

Sir: As cycling commuters and car-owners we welcome reports that the Government is considering fines for cyclists who ride on the pavement. We would also welcome fines for cyclists who ride at night without lights. Cyclists should be responsible road-users and we are increasingly angry with that small group of riders whose antics give the vast majority a bad name. However, we would welcome news of fines for others too: motorists who park in cy-

cle lanes; drivers who turn left without indicating, running the risk of knocking riders off their bikes; pedestrians with a death wish who walk out in front of cyclists without looking.

We all have to co-exist on the roads, and more people will be encouraged on to their bikes if they can be confident that motorists and pedestrians are more bicycle-aware. CAROL RAWLINGS NATHALIE SCHORBBON London N1

### London's choice

Sir: The election of a mayor for London is of interest to more than just Londoners. Such a momentous, and expensive, decision should not be rushed. In requiring the referendum to be delayed until eight weeks after publication of the legislation proposing it, the House of Lords have not indulged in an "anti-democratic vote" nor have they denied Londoners the chance to make a choice

(report, 14 January). On the contrary, they have upheld the democratic process by insisting that voters be allowed time for informed discussion.

Why is the Government so anxious to rush to this vote in May when it has so many more urgent priorities: health, education, welfare? If the Lords vote is truly attributable to a "handful of unelected, hereditary peers", as John Prescott says, then they seem to be more mindful of the democratic process than elected ministers. DEBORAH TOMPKINSON Maidenhead, Berkshire

### Age of the clones

Sir: In the debate on human cloning (report, 12 January), we never hear about one very important matter: a clone is not the same age as its source. The baby is indeed genetically identical, but will grow up in a different world. JOHN BEATTIE Glasgow

### Rewards of quitting

Sir: Your report (14 January) on the risks that remain after smokers quit should have made it clear that the risks if they don't quit are very much bigger. Although about half of all persistent smokers eventually get killed by their habit, stopping smoking works – smokers who stop before they have incurable cancer, or some other serious disease, do avoid most of their risk of eventually being killed by tobacco.

In the first decade of the new millennium there will be about a million British deaths from smoking, and the only way to cut that number substantially is for lots of adult smokers to decide that for them the benefits of stopping are worth the effort. Professor RICHARD PETO Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine University of Oxford

### Cornwall too

Sir: The British-Irish initiative on Northern Ireland includes the proposal to set up "an inter-governmental council to deal with the totality of relationships, to include representatives of the British and Irish governments, the Northern Ireland administration and the devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales".

A "Council of the Isles" is a good idea as far as it goes. However, the proposed membership cannot represent a "totality of relationships". The troubles in Northern Ireland affect the whole of Ireland and the British Isles. On a purely economic level, we are all paying the cost of civil unrest.

Let the Government admit that these islands are a patchwork of nations, sovereignties and cultures. A Council of the Isles must be open to all the Celtic nations in these isles. Cornwall and the Isle of Man need to have a place along with the rest. PAUL A DUNBAR Press Officer, Melyon Kernow Liskeard, Cornwall

### Above the smog

Sir: Tony Blair is supposed to be able to read the mood of the country, yet on the same day that the report on air pollution is made public (14 January) we read that he is planning to fly to Washington on Concorde, the least environmentally friendly aeroplane. V NELSON Bristol

## The trouble with newspapers is there's no news. It's all opinion and, er, columnists ...



MILES KINGDON

Today I am bringing you a bit more of the extraordinary case in the High Court in which a newspaper reader is taking his own favourite paper to court. George BR Higgs claims that the *Daily Post* is no longer a newspaper in the real sense of the word and should not be allowed to call itself such. Higgs has just taken the witness stand.

Counsel: Now, Mr Higgs, you have been reading the *Daily Post* for how long?

Higgs: About 20 years.

Counsel: Have you noticed any changes in the *Daily Post* over those years?

Higgs: Yes. It has acquired a

Property section, a Motoring section, a Jobs section, a Media

section, an Appointments section, a Travel section, a Holiday section, an Education section, a Gardening section ...

Counsel: Just a moment, just a moment. What is the difference between a Jobs section and an Appointments section? They sound the same to me.

Higgs: Oh, they are, but one is downmarket and one is upmarket. The same with overseas sections: Holiday is downmarket and Travel is upmarket.

Judge: Up which market?

Counsel: The marketplace of public taste, m'lud.

Judge: Ah. Has the public got any taste?

Counsel: No, my Lord.

Judge: I see. Carry on, and try

to make it easier to understand.

Counsel: Now, all these sections which have sprouted in the *Daily Post* over the years, what do you do with them?

Higgs: I throw them away.

Counsel: Why cannot you use them for drawer-lining or fire-lighting?

Higgs: I cannot line drawers or light fires as fast as the *Daily Post* can produce sections.

Counsel: Hmm ... So what do you have left when you have thrown away the other sections? The news, surely?

Higgs: This used to be true. But there is no longer any news in the paper.

Counsel: What do you find instead?

Higgs: Columns of opinion.

Columns of commentary. Letters from readers. Obituaries. Reports of sports events.

Counsel: Surely sports reports are news items?

Higgs: Occasionally. But most sports items are merely speculation about the future. "England have good chance in West Indies". "Ian Wright doubtful for big match". "We can do it", says Seve. It's not news. It's useless gazing into a clouded crystal ball. The main so-called news pages are the same. Blair pledges himself to reform. Dome is fine, says Mandelson. Hague accuses government of backsliding. All those things are reports of what people have said. Not of things that have happened. It is very rare to find news even in a good paper. That

is why I think newspapers should not be allowed to call themselves newspapers.

Counsel: All papers? Or just the *Daily Post*?

Higgs: *Daily Post* first. Rest later.

Judge: Mr Higgs ... Higgs: Yes, m'lud?

Judge: I have been listening to this case with some attention, which is not a boast I often make, and an interesting question occurs to me. If this case ends in judgment for you against the *Post*, do you think it will be reported in the *Post*?

Higgs: No, my Lord. But I think it will be widely reported elsewhere.

Judge: The effect would be to damage the *Post*, would it not?

Higgs: Yes, I suppose so.

Judge: And drive its purchase price down?

Higgs: I am not intending to purchase the *Post* ...

Judge: Then what do you think should happen to it?

Higgs: Papers like the *Post* need a rethink, my Lord. New strategy, new ideas, new blood.

Judge: What kind of new blood?

Higgs: A new man with vision, perhaps, my Lord. From time to time a great man comes along who can change things. A Rothermere, a Murdoch, a Thomson, a Maxwell ... well, perhaps not a Maxwell.

Judge: And who would you nominate as such a man?

Higgs: Well, Richard Branson, perhaps ...

Judge: Ah, yes. Mr Branson. He

already has planes and trains, records and banks, I believe.

Sooner or later such a man feels he needs a daily paper as well, does he not?

Higgs: I think he would make a very good newspaper proprietor ...

Judge: No doubt you do. But would it surprise you to learn that we judges have a list of things we are asked to look out for? And one of them is 'any court case which might be a disguised PR bid by Mr Branson, or any other man on the make, for a daily paper'?

Higgs: But ...

Judge: But nothing! Case dismissed! See headline in tomorrow's *Post*: "Judge Rebuffs Branson In Court Outburst!"

And the next case please



# 21/COMMENT

pens next

## The Blair and Murdoch stroll casts a bad shadow



ANDREW  
MARR  
A DUBIOUS  
ALLIANCE

As an act of modern diplomacy it was one of the weirdest and most eloquent little events in years: Tony Blair and Alastair Campbell spent a serious amount of time in Tokyo discussing their need for the Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto to apologise to Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* newspaper for his country's behaviour in the Second World War. Hashimoto, helped by Campbell, duly obliges and one of those all-time surrealistic headlines results: "Japan says sorry to the *Sun*". (On a par with Britain apologising to the bulldog, or America saying sorry to the Bald Eagle.)

Now, you could argue that this deal is logical and benign. Most of the country stopped agonising about the Japanese years ago. But of the minority of still-angry and in some cases xenophobic protesters, many are *Sun* readers; up to now their sensitivities have been regularly prodded with a sharp stick by the editor of that organ. A fresh Japanese apology to Britain is deemed unnecessary; but *Sun* readers, still bristling in their dug-out, are another matter. Well, fine. If the article helps smooth the way for the Japanese emperor's state visit in May, so much the better.

But Number 10 under Blair is famously obsessed with *The Sun*, just as it was when inhabited by Margaret Thatcher and John Major. The current Prime Minister would argue, I suppose, that unlike his predecessors, he has a chance of taming the red-faced rancor of British journalism, soothing and enticing it into a gentler and a more liberal world-view. Maybe, though its editor must know that in his market, blandness doesn't sell and populist, right-wing opinions do.

*The Sun* is only the beginning of this, however. Mr Blair's courtship of Murdoch began, I believe, as a damage-limitation exercise, meant to do no more than help New Labour get a fair playing-field in the 1997 election. But the flirtation blossomed into a genuine romance, and is now energetically consummated on a regular basis.

This may be sad, but it isn't surprising. The politics of Blair's Murdochism are crystal clear, and learnt from the Tories as well as from other leaders in Australia and the US: at all costs, get on side with the dominant media player and stay there. Murdoch is particularly useful to a government that wants to deal with him because (unlike at *The Independent* and other papers) he tells editors what to print. Deal with him and the deal affects all his journalists. It's very clean and efficient. From the point of view of the politician, it makes life simpler. You get his support. He gets your help with regulatory or other issues that touch his business.

Thus, this newspaper, like others, has been struggling to persuade Parliament to toughen the law on predatory pricing, the

anti-competitive technique whereby Murdoch dumps *The Times* at below what it costs to produce it in order to drive commercial competitors out of business.

Everyone acknowledges that it is happening, and no one professes to like it. Before the election, Labour saw a case for acting. Now, surprise, surprise, it doesn't. Many fine words have been uttered in Parliament on the subject. In the end, though, nothing will actually happen. Blair's own ministers say baldly and unequivocally that he will not cross Murdoch at any price. Some have the grace to look embarrassed when they tell us that whatever Murdoch wants, he'll get.

On the other hand, New Labour has shunned most of its natural supporters in the liberal press, and alienated most leading left or liberal journalists. All right, part of that is because such people are natural oppositionists, and have an almost biological need to disagree with Downing Street at all times. But the main reason is that the rest of the press isn't needed: New Labour has lines of communication to the public through broadcasting and the sleek yes-men on Murdoch papers.

Nor is it obvious that this deal will affect policy-making in other areas in the short term. Blair is forging ahead with welfare changes, constitutional reforms and educational changes just as he said he would. Across the board, you cannot say that this is a cynical or guileless Government, even if its chosen media delivery-system is an unattractive one.

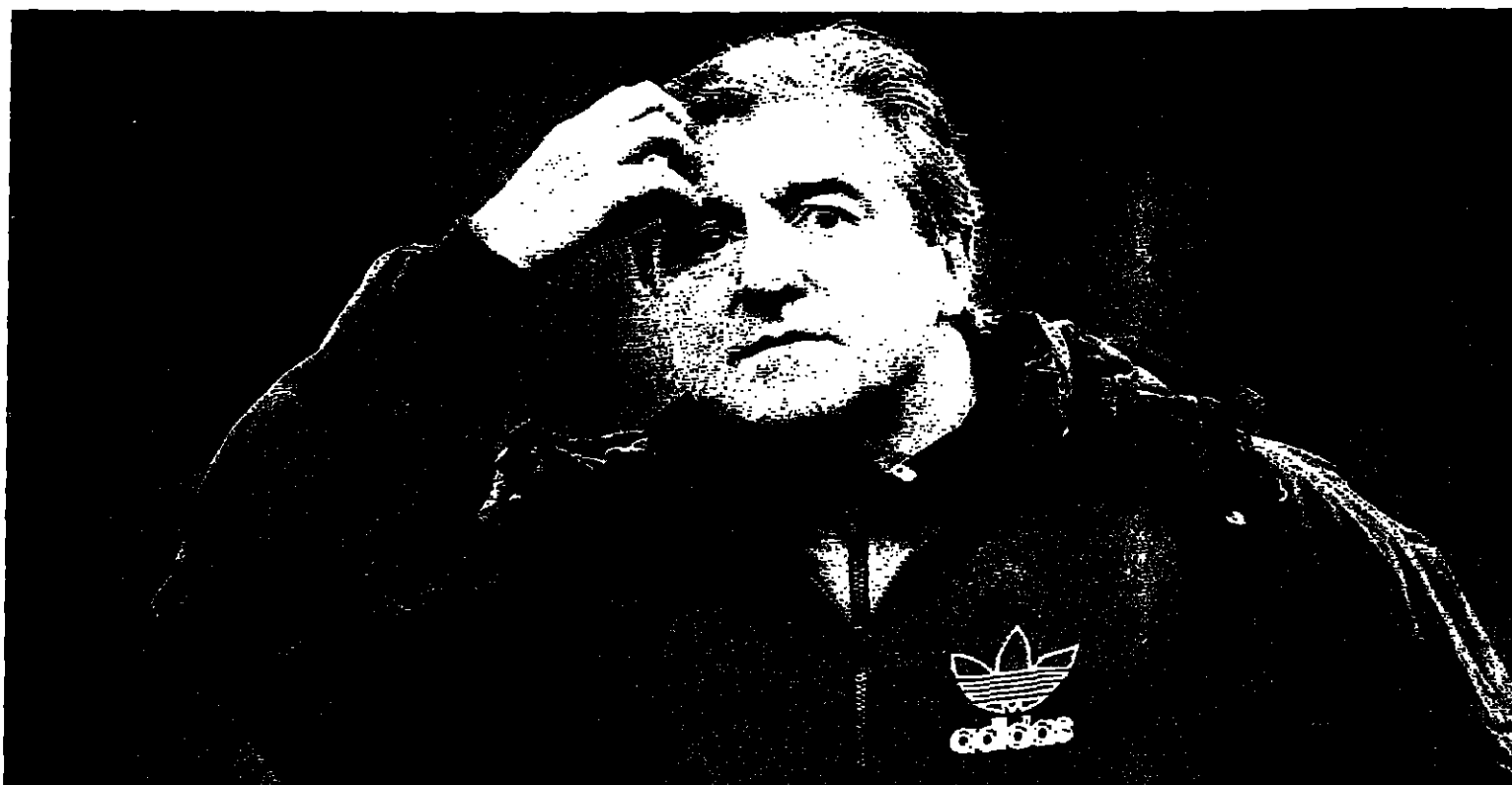
There are, however, dangers here which even a Prime Minister as powerful as Tony Blair should ponder. First, clearly, there is the danger that Murdoch grows so powerful that his demands cannot be resisted in policy areas that stretch beyond his immediate business requirements. The whole question of the single currency is an obvious example. If the newspaper market is shrunk by predatory pricing, and then ITV loses ground badly to BSkyB when it goes head to head, Murdoch's personal power, already large, will be awesome.

Does Mr Blair really suppose he will be able to break from this embrace without affecting his judgement or reputation? Not if he has followed Murdoch's career, as he must have. The Australian Labor Party, which provided an early model for New Labour, became enmeshed in a "mates' economy" which was eventually seen as cynical and corrupting. In the US, the White House itself intervened to protect the tycoon's Fox TV from interference by the Federal Communications Commission to the humiliated fury of its employees, and Newt Gingrich's book deal with Murdoch did the Republicans huge harm with a public that knows a greasy palm when it sees one.

In the case of Britain, an intense and stickily private concentration of political and media power at the heart of the state is exactly the opposite of everything that New Labour professes to believe in as a reforming party. Remember, this whole issue is one that simply cannot be written about in *The Times* or openly discussed by the burgeoning Murdoch empire. It matters, yet it is forbidden territory except in newspapers like this one.

The Conservatives created huge public cynicism about politics because of the perception of private deals and special arrangements for chums and backers. Of all the strong political cards in his hand, including the size of his majority and the talents of some of his leading people, Blair has none that matters more than his reputation for openness and fairness. He has big ambitions for the country. But if it is really true that he dare not protest about an unfair misuse of commercial muscle, then Britain has become a littler country than it was before.

## Why fans, players and journalists refused to believe the evidence



Sometimes nothing goes right: Terry Venables last month as his current team, Australia, loses to Brazil Photograph: Matthew Aston/Empics



DAVID  
AARONOVITCH  
ON THE TERRY  
VENABLES CASE

Just over 10 years ago, in November 1987, the manager of Tottenham Hotspur FC, David Pleat, was dismissed by the club following allegations about his private life. According to football writers Harry Harris and Steve Curry in their book *Venables, the Inside Story*, the Tottenham chairman, Irving Scholar, "sacked David Pleat with a particularly heavy heart. The fact that Pleat's personal problems came to a breaking point at the time that Venables was being replaced by Barcelona was merely coincidental".

Perhaps. But six weeks earlier, making a film about apprentice players at Spurs, I fell into conversation with Kate Hoey - now a Labour MP but then a tutor on life skills to these wannabe soccer stars, some of whom badly needed them. Pleat, she told me, was on his way out. "The players don't like him," she said of the man who had taken the club to third place in the league and (unsuccessfully) to the FA Cup Final. "The rumour is that the chairman wants Terry Venables." And pretty soon, he had him. As one man trudged disconsolately out of the back door, his replacement - all smiles and charisma - arrived to fans' applause through the big gates at the front.

A decade on, and Pleat is back with Tottenham as direc-

tor of football, and Terry Venables is neither manager nor director of anything. On Wednesday it was announced, in a statement from the Department of Trade and Industry, that Venables had reached a settlement with its lawyers, agreeing to be banned from any directorship, or virtually any other relationship with a commercial operation, for seven years. Accepting 19 charges of serious misconduct, all of which he had strenuously denied for the previous four years, Venables also agreed to pay half a million pounds of the DTI's costs. Three weeks ago, Venables' friend and business partner, Eddie Ashby, completed a four month prison sentence for breach of the bankruptcy laws.

In 1993, following the bust-up between Scholar's successor, Alan Sugar, and Terry Venables, which led to Venables' acrimonious departure from the club, the BBC's *Panorama* decided to investigate the feud between the two men. Mark Killick, the producer, says that he originally expected the story would be one of how a nasty, scrub-faced Thatcherite businessman ousted a working-class hero. It'd be the bastards versus the romantics.

But as Sugar told his side of the story about how Venables had run the business side of the club, the optimal anti-million-

aire tale evaporated. To be replaced, as research continued, by the weird story of how - led on by an unscrupulous and plausible partner (Ashby) - Venables had broken nearly every rule in the book: first in raising money to buy a stake in Tottenham, and then in his management of the north London side. At one stage, Killick recalls, he sent a researcher down to Cardiff to look for a pub called The Miners, against which Venables had attained part of a million pound loan. When the young woman failed to find the place, he got quite shirty with her. Only after she had wandered round the Welsh capital for three days did he accept the almost unbelievable truth that this pub didn't exist at all.

The *Panorama* that went out on the 4 October 1993, and a similar programme transmitted days later on Channel 4, were not what the sports establishment and its journalistic arms wanted to hear. The FA regarded Sugar as a dangerous parvenu, importing unwelcome radical ideas into an industry run by chain-smokers in fur-collared coats. Venables, by contrast, was one of theirs. A source of good stories for favoured journalists, half-way through a big presenter's contract for the powerful BBC sport's department, and popular with the ordinary supporters, many in soccer wanted the story not to be true. So, when Venables contested the *Panorama* version, threatened legal action and complained that documents had been forged or stolen, there were many who were ready to believe him. In some newspapers a battle ensued between the Venables-supporting back pages - home of adventure and ro-

mance - and the money men and women on the City desks. Jeff Powell, influential soccer commentator of the *Daily Mail*, wrote of a "media witch-hunt ignited by his [Venables'] bitter feud with Alan Sugar".

Gradually, as court actions loomed, the whole business lapsed into a "you pays your money and you takes your choice" period, where most people chose to believe whoever they liked best. As an executive in the BBC current affairs department at that time, I had seen the evidence, since any programme like this one was subjected to a battery of legal tests that made Volvo's safety procedures look dilatory. And I knew that they had Venables bang to rights.

With the passage of time, however, Venables began to emerge on top. Even those who thought that he had probably been a little naughty, decided - in the words of *Panorama* reporter Martin Bashir - that he was a "loveable rogue" in the English tradition of *Mind*. OK, so he was a bit fly with money, but he hadn't been found guilty of anything. And now England was calling, its soccer team had just failed dismally to qualify for the 1994 World Cup, and the nation wanted Venables. Under a year after his departure from Spurs, Tel was appointed by the FA as England manager.

And now no one wanted to hear him criticised. This newspaper did comment on the risk that, as the FA is a limited company, if Venables were to be disqualified, he could not under the Insolvency Act remain as England manager. In other words, if *Panorama* were proved right, Venables would have to be fired under the most embarrassing circumstances. Kate Hoey, now in the House of Commons, warned against the appointment, and was vilified both in the newspapers, and by party colleagues who were closer than she to the sports establishment. When *Panorama* put out a second programme in September 1994, some felt that it was being - as it had been during the Falklands war - vaguely treacherous. "Must you?" was the reaction of most BBC TV executives to the news that there would be another Venables show. Others spoke of a journalistic vendetta.

I don't expect any of those who criticised Hoey or *Panorama* to apologise. Many will have forgotten that they ever doubted the facts of the case. But the truth is that, for several years, a man of charm and charisma was allowed to hold one of the big jobs in English national life because we simply didn't want to believe that he was bent. How politicians must long for a fraction of that latitude!

## Mr Hague, you could make Lords reform more radical



DONALD  
MACINTYRE  
AFTER THE  
PEERAGE

Lloyd George cruelly called it "a body of 500 men chosen at random from among the ranks of the unemployed". But it has taken until now for his goal - of removing the hereditary peers from Parliament - to be in sight at last. A 1998-99 bill will remove the right of hereditary peers to vote. That much is relatively simple. Even among among life peers the Tories enjoy a majority over Labour (147 to 98), so some new Labour peers will be created to even the parties up. An unspecified number of hered-

itary peers, chosen by their own party leaders, will also be turned into life peers but now for the hard part. The Government will also announce its intention to proceed, eventually, to a more democratic second chamber. But of what kind?

No doubt it will change as the committee on Lords reform chaired by Lord Irvine - which held its first meeting last week - does its work. But a route map is now beginning to take shape. One influential view is that the second chamber should be two-thirds elected (probably by proportional representation on a regional list system) with the other third made up of distinguished cross-benchers, chosen by an independent appointments body. Members of the new second chamber might be elected for a fixed four-year term - like those for the Scottish parliament. (This is an admirable idea - if only because it means that with different electoral cycles the second chamber might be controlled by a different majority from the first, thus sharpening its role as a check on the executive.) Learning from the lessons of the 1960s, the Government would not try to alter

the powers at the same time as the composition of the second chamber: instead, recognising that the more democratic legitimacy it has, the more it will clamour for extra powers, it would allow its remit to expand - within severe limits - incrementally, rather than on the model of the European Parliament. But the detailed question of the form of an elected chamber would be left to a Royal Commission - as especially excited and imposing one, to ensure that rejection of its findings would be highly embarrassing for whichever government was in power by the time it reported.

So far so good. This is actually rather a brave scenario. But there are grave dangers at every step. Even removal of the hereditary element, the most deeply desired change in the Labour Party, will not be achieved without a ritual struggle by the forces of aristocratic reaction. There are already whispers that the peers' Tory majority could seek to cause trouble on other legislation in protest at the reform. (At present every defeat of the Government - like the one this week on the referendum on a London mayor - simply un-

derlines the case for reform, which is why the Tory whips in the Lords have been energetically trying to keep them to a minimum.) But such guerrilla action cannot be sustained indefinitely. The much greater danger is that of inertia on the part of the governing party. That once having achieved a carefully balanced super-quango, a second-term Labour government finds it rather likes it. Its own MPs in the Commons, having gorged themselves on the bleeding corpse of a disenfranchised aristocracy, then stop and think how appealing it would be to end their own careers as political appointees in a patronage-only Upper House. And what a threat to the Commons' own legitimacy it might be for there to be a democratically elected second chamber above it. Meanwhile the Government itself suddenly dreams up all sorts of reasons why it should not create a bothersome revising chamber, subject to the whims of the electorate and emboldened by its own legitimacy to challenge the executive hard and often.

There are grounds, however, for cautious optimism that the dynamic for change will be such that this won't happen.

The Tory line, that they are not against reform but will oppose the bill removing the hereditary peerage's voting rights because it will produce an undemocratic abortion should be treated with suspicion. Their fears about the first stage are entirely legitimate. But if the current Tory regime was as progressive as some of their predecessors - such as Lord Carrington who actually made strenuous efforts to help Dick Crossman reform the Lords in the Sixties, or Alec Douglas Home who strongly advocated a mainly elected second chamber - they would now be outflanking Labour by publicly pushing proposals of their own for a democratised upper house. Indeed there is still time for them to do so. If they promised support for the broad strategy outlined above, they might even be able to negotiate a deal under which the reform could be achieved in a single stage.

Their present strategy, however, is to call for a grand committee of both houses, which (since it is sure to contain those in both the main parties who have a vested interest in delaying a democratised second chamber) is a sure recipe for sclerosis. The dangers of Roy-

al Commissions is that they are mechanisms for delay; though a forthcoming Constitution Unit report argues strongly that there should be at least some delay between the stages, so that the powers as well as composition of a second chamber can be properly considered in the light of other changes - not least, if it happens, to the system of electing the Commons. But the great virtue of a Royal Commission is that it would take the issue outside the incestuous confines of Westminster.

The very fact that the Tories are now signed up - for whatever motives - to the correct proposition that an unelected second chamber is unsustainable in a modern democracy makes it more difficult for future governments of either party not to commit themselves to the further stage once the hereditary peers have lost their voting rights. Removal of the voting rights of hereditary peers is the best part of a century overdue, unfinished business from the Asquith premiership. But in anything but the short term, an appointed second chamber will be no more sustainable - morally, or let's hope, politically.

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## Railtrack 'prepares to take £500m Channel link stake'

The go-ahead for construction of the £5.4bn Channel tunnel rail link was signalled yesterday as speculation continued to mount that Railtrack is preparing to take a stake of up to £500m in the project. Michael Harrison reports.

London & Continental Railways, the consortium chosen to build the 68-mile link and operate Eurostar services, announced an important breakthrough yesterday by naming contractors for the key tunnelling sections into St Pancras station.

Work on the tunnels, worth £200m, will start in April and removes any lingering doubts that the project would stop short of central London because of financing difficulties.

Adam Mills, LCR's chief executive, said the consortium was on course to raise up to £5.4bn in debt and equity in the middle of this year to cover total financing costs, including construction which is estimated at £3bn. The link is scheduled to open in 2003.

LCR also said that it was close to signing a deal to redevelop St Pancras Chambers, the listed Gothic-style building at the front of the planned Eurostar terminus, while the planning application to develop an intermediate station at Ebbsfleet in north Kent had been approved.

LCR plans to raise about £1bn through a share issue and a further £4.4bn in bank loans of which £1.4bn will be repaid from a government grant payable once the project is two-thirds complete.

However, LCR declined to quash speculation that Railtrack may emerge with a significant equity stake in the project. A spokesman said: "There are all sorts of options as to how Railtrack could be involved and putting in equity is one of the them. However, discussions are still at a preliminary stage."

The other attraction of bringing Railtrack into the project is that it has a triple A debt rating, making it easier and cheaper for LCR to raise loans. Railtrack is one of six outside parties with which LCR is in discussions about helping to finance or construct the link.

There are eight members of the LCR consortium at present. The biggest are SBC Warburg Dillon Read and Bechtel, each with stakes of 18 per cent, followed by Virgin and National Express, each with 17 per cent.

LCR has come in for criticism from the City for the lack of detailed information about the project and delays in fund raising, leading to fears that it would turn into another Eurotunnel - vastly over budget and behind time. However, LCR has defended the delays, insisting that it will not go to the capital markets until it has a cast-iron investment case and is certain of its costs.

LCR also defended the performance of its Eurostar services to Paris and Brussels, saying that passenger levels had risen by more than 20 per cent to 6 million in 1997, giving it 60 per cent of the rail/air market between London and Paris.

Analysts estimate that Eurostar will have to increase passenger numbers to nearer 10 million before it starts to contribute profits. But Hamish Taylor, Eurostar's managing director, said that passenger yields had continued to improve last year, helped by a new ticketing and reservations system.

He added that bookings on Eurostar's new ski train service from Waterloo to the French Alps were "encouraging" while services to Brussels had been increased from eight to 10 trains a day following the opening of a high-speed line through Belgium which reduced journey times from three hours to two hours 40 minutes.

The construction contracts announced yesterday cover a quarter of the total tunnelling along the route. The preferred contractors are Tractebel, a joint venture between Mowlem, Holzmann and Besix, and a joint venture between Nurtall/Ways and Freytag/Kier.

The biggest contract, worth £500m, for a tunnel taking the line to Stratford in East London is expected to be awarded shortly.

The development partner for St Pancras Chambers, formerly the old BR Midland hotel, will be announced in the next fortnight along with an outline of the proposed scheme. LCR launched a competition to develop the Grade One listed building in September, 1996.



The development partner for St Pancras Chambers (above) will be announced in the next fortnight. Photograph: David Rose

## GEC set to win £1bn tilting train order

GEC and Fiat look set to win the UK's largest train order yet, the £1bn contract to supply Virgin with high-speed tilting trains for the West Coast Mainline.

It emerged yesterday that one of three bidders, Siemens of Germany, had pulled out of the shortlist while Adtranz, the joint venture between ABB of Sweden and Daimler Benz, was lagging behind GEC. Industry sources said GEC had been chosen for the final detailed discussions on the order.

The joint bid made by GEC and Fiat would guarantee jobs at GEC-Alsthom's plants at Birmingham and Preston, which employ just under 2,000 people. About 70 per cent of the work would come to the UK, with bogies, tilting mechanisms and body shells sourced from Italy and the remainder of the work, including final assembly, carried out in Britain.

The 55 trains, each with seven carriages and capable of speeds of up to 160mph, would be based on Fiat's Italian Pendolino design. They would cut journey times to Birmingham to one hour, replacing some of the most outdated stock on the rail network. Virgin was yesterday heavily criticised for the reliability of its West Coast services.

Siemens yesterday attacked Virgin, claiming the operator had insisted on draconian penalty clauses for late delivery amounting to some 30 per cent of the cost of the order. Jürgen Gehrels, Siemens UK chief executive, said Virgin had also insisted on unrealistic delivery times.

Separately yesterday it emerged that Siemens has won a contract worth up to £65m to supply a fleet of 16 electric trains to Regional Railways North East, the privatised train operator based in York. The 100mph trains, which will be leased through Angel, one of the three rolling-stock leasing groups, will replace a fleet of 20 trains dating from the 1960s.

The new trains, which are similar to those built by Siemens for the Heathrow Express line, will be assembled in Spain, with parts supplied from Germany and some from Britain. The UK contribution includes communications and electronic systems for the carriages.

Chris Godsmark

## Laura Ashley puts factories up for sale as shares crash to all-time low

Shares in Laura Ashley crashed to an all-time low yesterday after the troubled retailer issued another profits warning and put five factories up for sale. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, asks whether new chief executive David Hoare can turn the business around, or only clean it up for a quick sale.

Laura Ashley's fourth profits warning in less than a year was prompted by a dreadful performance in America, weak home furnishings sales and lower gross margins due to heavy discounting. Though management said its stock levels were now 25 per cent lower than last year there were reports that its shops were even allowing customers to haggle over prices in a desperate attempt to clear excess stock.

The business is now expected to record a pre-exceptional loss of £23m-26m in the year to January. Previous estimates by the company's broker had been for losses of £15m. The shares lost a further 25 per cent of their value, falling 8.5p to 26p.

However, David Hoare, who replaced Ann Iverson as chief executive before Christmas, insisted that Laura Ashley still has a future as an independent business. "Can it be turned around? I think it has every opportunity. This business has an independent future," he said.

The company has decided to pull out of manufacturing and put five factories up for sale in order to concentrate on its retailing operations. The decision will jeopardise 669 jobs. The sites under threat include four in Wales - two sewing factories in Oswestry and Gresford, the Texplan wallpaper and fabric printing operations in Newtown, a

made to measure plant in Carno - and a small site in Holland.

The move will end Laura Ashley's long-standing relationship with the Welsh valleys. However, the company said that it hoped to sell the factories as going concerns, safeguarding the workforce. "It is a hard, tough decision. But initial reaction there is that this is the right thing to do," said Stephen Cox, the group's director of legal and commercial services. He said the decision would enable Laura Ashley to concentrate on brand management and retail.

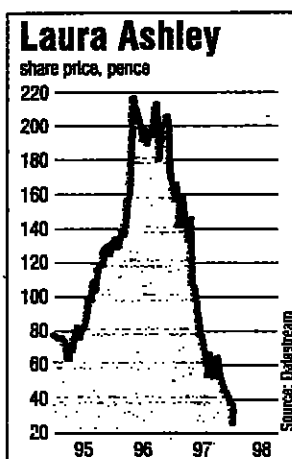
It is possible that the company will also pull out of North America after a disastrous expansion there by Ms Iverson. It was a disastrous performance there which was behind a 4 per cent fall in like-for-like sales across the group in the seven weeks to 10 January. US sales collapsed by 13 per cent. Trading in home

furnishings have been particularly weak with margins suffering from heavy discounting.

Michael Appel, a turnaround specialist, has been appointed as chief executive of the North American operations to implement a recovery programme.

There are fears that mounting losses and possible exceptional costs relating to the sale of the Welsh factories could mean that Laura Ashley may run into further cash flow problems. Though fresh £70m loan facilities were agreed with bankers before Christmas some analysts fear that on a month to month basis, the group will be in a precarious financial position.

Analysts speculated yesterday whether Sir Bernard Ashley, Laura Ashley's widower, who controls 35 per cent of the company may be tempted to take the company private. Another possibility is that Mr Hoare will slim the



## C&G boss quits Lloyds in boardroom shake-up

Andrew Longhurst, once regarded as the heir apparent at Lloyds TSB, the banking giant, has quit as a board director and as chairman of Cheltenham & Gloucester, the former building society. Mr Longhurst, who is 53, was "reorganised out of a job" following a surprise shake-up at Lloyds, according to a source.

A Lloyds TSB spokesperson said: "Andrew Longhurst was group director of customer finance. That role no longer exists."

The colourful Mr Longhurst, regarded as one of the leading figures in the UK mortgage industry, was a casualty of Lloyds' decision to "focus on customer relationships".

One analyst commented: "I was a bit stunned to see the golden-haired boy leaving. Whether he decided to leave or whether it was decided for him I just don't know."

"It seems strange that there is no longer room on the Lloyds board for the man synonymous with Cheltenham & Gloucester", added another source.

Mr Longhurst has been associated with C&G for more than 30 years. Lloyds was yesterday keen to dispel rumours that Mr Longhurst had been "edged out". "Mr Longhurst fully supports the reorganisation", said a spokesperson.

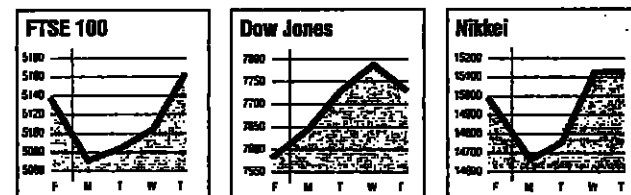
Some of Mr Longhurst's responsibilities, in particular on the mortgage side, will fall to Michael Fairley, 49, who was yesterday appointed deputy chief executive and tipped as an eventual successor to Peter Ellwood, the current chief executive.

Gordon Pell, currently director of distribution, will also take up some of Mr Longhurst's workload. Mr Pell is to join the board and take responsibility for a newly created UK retail banking division.

Mr Longhurst was yesterday unavailable for comment. His successor at the head of the C&G will be announced "shortly".

Lea Paterson

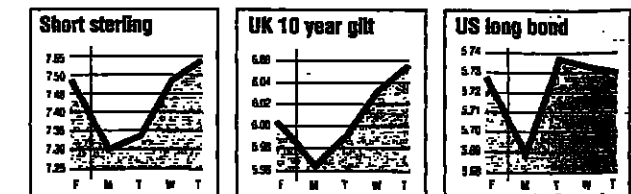
## STOCK MARKETS



Indices

Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	YTD(%)
FTSE 100	5185.80	58.90	1.15	6367.30	4147.60	3.46
FTSE 250	4616.30	-7.00	-0.15	4993.60	4384.20	3.27
FTSE 350	2484.30	22.40	0.91	2570.50	2481.60	3.42
FTSE All Share	2436.80	20.38	0.86	2507.68	2040.16	3.40
FTSE SmallCap	2350.00	-0.10	0.00	2407.40	2182.10	3.06
FTSE Floating	1278.70	-0.30	-0.02	1346.50	1225.20	3.32
FTSE AIM	978.40	-1.60	-0.16	1138.00	965.90	1.18
Dow Jones	7731.63	-56.05	-0.72	8299.03	6356.78	1.07
Nikkei	15121.98	366.04	2.48	20910.79	14488.21	1.01
Hong Kong	8578.98	-847.57	-9.78	16820.31	7999.13	4.94
Dax	4148.34	-41.74	-1.00	4459.89	2970.45	1.78

## INTEREST RATES



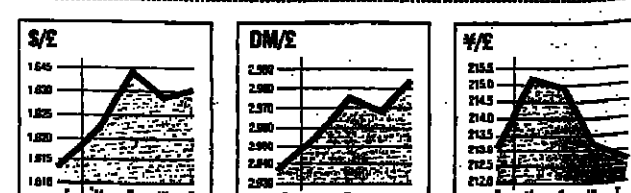
Money Market Rates

Index	3 months	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.60	1.14	7.61	0.87	6.06	-1.48	6.02
US	5.60	0.04	5.63	-0.31	5.46	-1.07	5.72
Japan	0.73	0.24	0.68	0.13	1.67	-0.71	2.50
Germany	3.56	0.43	3.81	0.61	5.07	-0.89	5.66

## MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls	Price (p)	Change	% Change	Price (p)	Change	% Change
Indicorp	155.50	12.50	8.74	House of Fraser	203.50	-16.00	-7.85
Shells	38.50	7.50	8.24	Arco	505.00	-33.00	-6.53
Centrica	103.00	7.00	7.29	B&W	122.5	-7	-5.67
Sun Life and Pro	499.00	29.00	6.17	Wayfair Corp	178.5	-3	-1.68

## CURRENCIES



Pound				Dollar			
	at 10am	Change	1 yr Ago		at 10am	Change	1 yr Ago
Dollar	1.6303	+0.12c	1.6834	Sterling	0.6134	-0.05c	0.5940
D-Mark	2.9841	+1.27m	2.6722	D-Mark	1.8295	+0.59m	1.9870
Yen	212.67	-11.16	196.50	Yen	130.45	-10.81	116.10
£ Index	104.90	+0.10	98.30	£ Index	110.10	-0.10	99.30

## OTHER INDICATORS

- at 10am	Close	Chg	1Y Ago		Index	Chg	1Y Ago	Next Day
Brent Oil (\$)	15.07	0.12	23.59	GDP	113.90	3.70	109.84	Feb 10
Gold (\$)	284.15	2.70	352.50	RPI	180.00	3.60	154.44	Feb 10
Silver (\$)	5.90	0.10	4.85	Base Rates	7.25	6.00		

[www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com) SOURCE: Bloomberg

www.bloomberg.com source: Bloomberg

## La Senza slumps after another profits warning

La Senza, the troubled lingerie group, announced yet another profits warning yesterday after admitting that Christmas sales had been well below expectations. Joel Teitelbaum, son of the group's co-founder and the man who has presided over La Senza's failure in the UK market, has left the group.

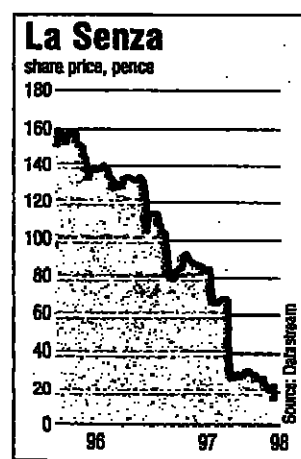
The shares dropped 12 per cent, piling on the woes for those investors who stumped up 150p for the stock when it was floated by advisors Williams de Broe in May 1996. It closed yesterday at 19p, down 2.5p.

Laurence Lewin, the deputy chairman, accepted that La Senza had only itself to blame for its dire trading performance and the fact that it has no chance of achieving its

prospective profit projections. Mr Lewin, said yesterday: "We have to take responsibility and cannot shelter behind excuses. We are retailers and it is our job to get it right. Now we will have to get this show on the road and reduce losses."

The group clocked up losses of £1.5m in the year to January 1996 and admitted yesterday it would plunge a lot further into the red in the current financial year. On flotation it gave a profits projection of £2.3m. Mr Lewin refused to predict when La Senza would finally break into the black.

La Senza has been rocked by the rise in property values and rents which has blown a huge hole in its expansion plans. Sales have proved disappointing and Mr Lewin admits that many of the group's



## City's super-regulator renews drive to fill senior vacancies

The Financial Services Authority, the city's new super-regulator, yesterday confirmed it had sent letters to leading figures in the financial sector in an urgent plea to fill four vacancies - but admitted the pay was "derisory".

The FSA has so far filled 13 out of 17 directors' posts with exactly the same people who used to run the nine old regulators which it is replacing. Last year, firms said they feared the new regulator would be out of touch with commercial realities.

Howard Davies, the chairman of the FSA, has now contacted dozens of leading figures in financial services in an attempt to persuade them to fill "important gaps in crucial posts, which we are now looking outside to fill." These include a director of investment business,

a director of finance and business planning, a director of consumer relations and a director of market exchanges.

But there is concern the regulator will have difficulty filling the posts with well-qualified people unless it can offer salaries approaching the generous rewards of the City. The FSA is still looking for candidates, despite appointing recruitment consultant Saxton Bampfylde and advertising in the press.

In a letter to potential applicants, Mr Davies wrote: "Needless to say, the packages we can offer are derisory by market standards, but the interest quotient of the jobs is very high!" Until now, regulators have been paid comfortable six-figure salaries.

Andrew Verity

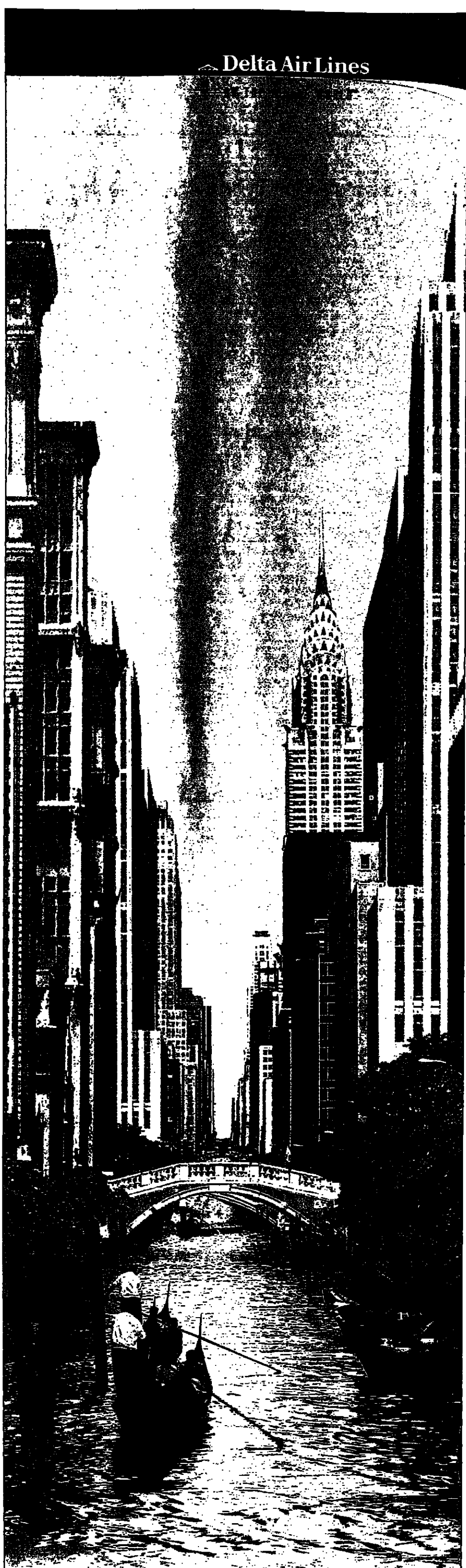
Andrew Yates

Unilever in the tig









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THE INDEPENDENT  
FRIDAY 16 JANUARY 1998  
24

# 24/BUSINESS

## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

### FI paints bullish growth picture

Everyone knows the information technology (IT) industry is booming. The reasons are familiar: pressure on companies to improve their efficiency by automating, the need to prepare IT systems for monetary union, not to mention the dreaded millennium bug. But any boom brings the risk of a bust. The first worry is of staff shortages, which could force IT groups to postpone contracts, thereby hampering their rate of growth. The second is that, having successfully squashed the millennium bug, the rush of work will dry up and the IT industry will go into a slump.

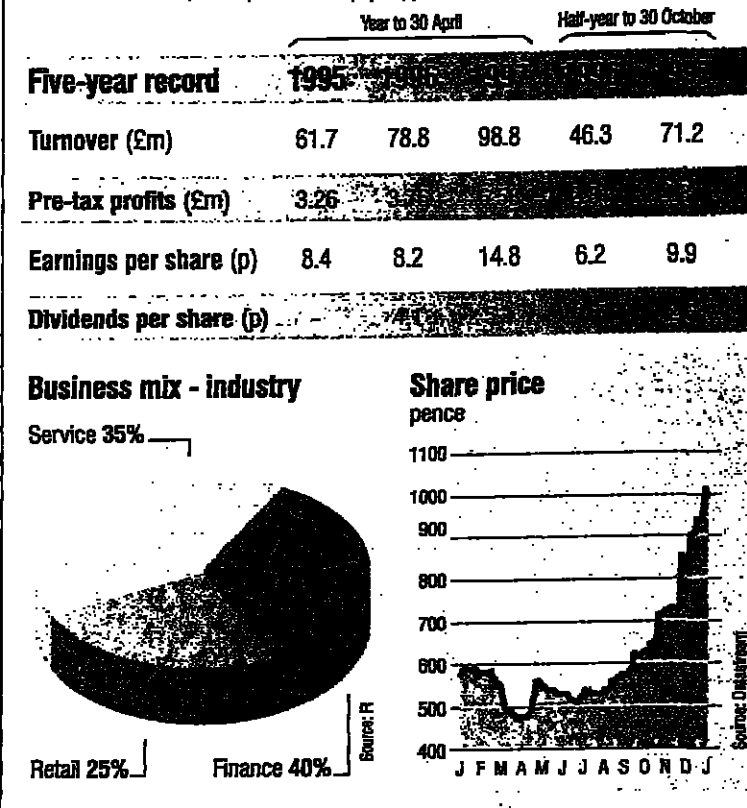
When a company has just reported a 54 per cent increase in first-half profits to £4.31m, as FI Group just has, raising these fears may seem overly gloomy. But Hilary Cropper, chief executive of the applications management specialist, has a convincing response to both. She points out that fixing computers' inability to recognise the year 2000 as a valid date currently accounts for just 12 per cent of the group's sales. What's more, the rush to fix the problem has prompted firms to put other, less pressing, IT projects on hold until the next decade. By then, the UK's likely entry into monetary union will have thrown up a whole load of new gremlins for FI to tackle.

FI's real secret weapon, however, is IIS Infotech, the Indian computer services company it bought for £25m last month. By farming out work to India, the group will be able to tap into a labour market which produces more software graduates than the US each year, all willing to be employed at a fraction of the cost of a British programmer. That allows FI to move beyond serving its traditional areas of finance, retailing and the service sector. The group thinks it can start undercutting its competitors and pinch contracts in the manufacturing and consumer goods industries, as well as the City.

All this adds up to a very bullish growth picture. That said, the shares reflect this. Brokers reckon full-year profits will be £9.5m, rising to about £13m the following year. That prices the shares, which edged up 5p to 1002.5 yesterday, at a staggering 38 times April 1999 earnings. FI is an impressive business with better

### FI Group: At a glance

Market value: £322m, share price 1002.5p (+5p)



prospects than most of its peers. But for the time being it's hard to see the shares rising much further from these heady levels.

### House of Fraser recovery in train

After years of what seemed like unending misery House of Fraser finally shows the green shoots of recovery in 1997. Its new own label ranges are taking off, some of its worst department stores have been revamped or earmarked for sale, stock problems have largely been eradicated and margins are on the rise. The City has embraced the good news and the share price which has had a great run.

But just as everything seemed to be going right HoF has come out with disappointing trading figures in the run up to Christmas and the shares fell more than 7 per cent to 203.5p. So is this a blip or is a warning sign that the

HoF is back to its old tricks again?

Sales growth has slowed. Part of the reason is that HoF suffered from the downturn in the retail market in the Autumn and shoppers' determination to leave Christmas presents to the last moment. The rest of the slowdown stems from the management's drive for margins, mainly through pushing their own fashion brands rather than relying on creaming off some of the takings from in-store concessions. Gross margins grew about one percentage point to 33 per cent, but this too disappointed some analysts who were hoping for faster progress.

The underlying message is that, along with the retail market as a whole, HoF's Christmas was nothing to write home about but was hardly a disaster. The share price fall looks harsh but the shares had flown too high too early on unrealistic expectations of the speed of HoF's reforms.

Société Générale forecasts has left profit forecasts for the year to the end of January at £28.5m, but has downgraded profits for the following year

from £37m to £35m putting the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of 23.5 times to 19. HoF is moving in the right direction but on this sort of price the shares are no bargain.

### Portmeirion's small servings

Portmeirion Potteries, the top-market table and ovenware business, yesterday served up another set of disappointing figures. Neither summer windfalls nor winter sales seem to have brought any joy to the group and it was forced to issue its second profit warning in the last six months. This caused the shares to crash another 52.5p to 240p yesterday, chipping another £5m off its market capitalisation. It is now valued at just under £25m, less than half its worth last summer.

In August the company, which is still controlled by the family of architect Clough Williams-Ellis, reported a 9 per cent increase in first half profits to £2.7m but warned that difficult trading conditions meant full year profits would be flat.

The shares have been sliding downwards ever since and yesterday the company added to investors' woes by warning that earnings would now fall £1m short of last year.

A special anniversary promotion rescued first-half profits in the US market, which accounts for over 40 per cent of turnover. However, sales have fallen away in the last few months, while the continued strength of sterling has depressed exports to Europe.

The home market also remains sluggish. Portmeirion does not seem to have attracted any of the windfall spending which has helped keep demand for other consumer goods buoyant, and the company remains opposed to the price discounting which consumers increasingly demand.

Analysts are also concerned at the lack of new products in the pipeline and have again downgraded profits forecasts. They are now looking at £5.4m for 1997 and £5.65m in 1998. The shares now look very cheap at under seven times this year's prospective earnings but investors would be wise to wait for any signs of a sustained recovery before buying.

### Two charged over alleged \$2bn City gold fraud

Two men have been charged and two released on bail after allegedly attempting to trade forged gold certificates worth \$2bn (£1.2bn) at a London branch of NatWest. The four men were arrested at the NatWest branch on Wednesday evening following a covert operation by the City of London Police Fraud Squad. Detective Inspector Ken Stewart, an officer on the case, said: "The excellent assistance we received from the bank in this case shows that by joint co-operation we can effectively combat this type of fraud."

### Budget set for 17 March

Chancellor Gordon Brown will deliver his second Budget statement to the Commons on Tuesday 17 March, the Government announced yesterday. The day was named by Leader of the House, Ann Taylor, in exchanges on coming parliamentary business. It marks a return to spring Budgets from the combined tax and spending package in the autumn under the previous Tory government.

### Early Freemans demerger

Sears, the troubled retailer, has accelerated the planned demerger of Freemans, its mail order business, to the autumn of this year. In a trading statement, the group said trading at Freemans was strong, with underlying sales rising by 6 per cent so far in the second half. In the 23 weeks to 10 January same store sales for the whole group, excluding the footwear businesses, were up 2.6 per cent.

### Amey secures contract

Amey, the construction company, said yesterday that a joint venture of its rail track laying arm had won a £130m contract from Railtrack. Amey's subsidiary Amey Railways, in joint venture with SECO/DGC of France, will renew railway tracks in Railtrack's Great Western region and will involve 3,000 miles of track.

### Cognizant's second break-up

Cognizant, the \$7.5bn group spun out of Dun & Bradstreet 14 months ago, yesterday announced plans to split into two groups in what would be the first demerger of a company that has already demerged. It will be divided into IMS Health, which provides information solutions to the pharmaceutical industries and which has 600 staff in the UK, and Nielsen Media Research, which provides electronic audience measurement.

### COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Sidney C Banks (I)	178.1m (162.9m)	2.16m (2.18m)	15.1p (15.7p)	4.25p (4.25p)
Epic Multimedia (I)	1.8m (2.2m)	0.103m (-0.921m)	0.44p (3.85p)	nil
Paropak (I)	32.18m (30.74m)	1.89m (1.01m)	2.74p (1.39p)	1.55p (1.37p)
FI Group (I)	71.2m (46.3m)	4.31m (2.81m)	9.4p (6.2p)	2.8p (1.7p)
Greenwich Resources (F) - (-)	-0.228m (1.95m)	0.004p (1.5p)	nil	nil
Greenwich Computing (F) - (-)	0.68m (9.27m)	0.667m (1.88m)	1.17p (2.15p)	0.5p (0.5p)

(F) - Final (I) - Interim



Janis Kong, Gatwick's managing director, celebrating a record-breaking year for the BAA

## BAA rail-link plans lift off after Heathrow fire setback

Last month's fire at Heathrow's Terminal One lost BAA 50,000 passengers, the airports operator, said yesterday.

But on a brighter note, the company unveiled plans to launch a forerunner to its £440m Heathrow Express rail link later this month. Michael Harrison reports.

The Heathrow fire, which started in the ducting of a Burger King bar in Terminal One, left a large dent in BAA's passenger figures for December. The group's seven airports handled a record total of 103.3 million passengers for the year - an in-

crease of 6.7 per cent on 1996. But the growth in passenger numbers for December was only half that at 3.4 per cent.

Another factor affecting passenger growth last month was the blaze inside the Channel tunnel a year earlier which had resulted in an extra 100,000 passengers in December, 1996. BAA also experienced a sharp decline in travel by East Asian passengers because of the economic crisis in the Far East. This resulted in a loss of about 75,000 passengers.

The biggest traffic growth over the year was at Stansted where passenger numbers rose 11.5 per cent to 5.37 million, closely followed by Gatwick where traffic levels rose 11.2 per cent to 26.8 million.

The Heathrow Express is not due to open until June. It will cut the journey time from the airport into Paddington station to 15 minutes.

However, BAA is launching what it calls a Fast Train service from 19 January which will take 30 minutes. Passengers will travel on new trains from Paddington to a dedicated station near Heathrow where passengers will complete the journey by coach. For the first week, travel will be free. After that a one-way fare will cost £5.

The full Heathrow Express service will operate four times an hour and is part of BAA's strategy to increase the number of passengers travelling by public transport to 50 per cent.

### BA to take equity stake in Polish airline

British Airways is planning to take an equity stake in LOT, the Polish airline with which it forged a strategic alliance yesterday, its first with a carrier from a former eastern bloc country. LOT is due to be privatised as part of the Polish government's liberalisation programme and Charles Gurnas, director of passenger business at BA, said it would consider buying shares at that stage.

The alliance with LOT will involve a code-sharing agreement on flights on the Manchester-Warsaw and Gatwick-Krakow routes, reciprocal participation in frequent-flyer programmes and co-operation between the Polish airline and BA's German subsidiary Deutsche BA. The deal means that BA now has strategic alliances with three European airlines - the other two are Iberia and Finnair. But Mr Gurnas

said it was keen to build further partnerships. There are at least twelve European carriers yet to sign up to one of the global alliances such as Star, which are coming to dominate the aviation market. They include Aer Lingus, Portugalia, Maersk in Denmark, Meridiana in Italy, Olympic of Greece, El Al and the Russian airline Aeroflot.

Michael Harrison







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# Yet another large step for Mann

When he was forced to give up riding for training, Charlie Mann had little more than a reputation as a fast liver and a fast talker. His remarkable results have proved the doubters wrong and, as Richard Edmondson hears, he could be poised to record his biggest success yet at Ascot tomorrow.

If he wins the Victor Chandler Chase at Ascot tomorrow, Charlie Mann will become Mann's best friend. Charlie Mann has been many things in his life - bon viveur, potty jockey and submarine salesman - but now the vision is set solely on becoming a successful trainer. And when it comes to boardings there is nothing better than a big-race televised winner on a Saturday.

Charlie James Mann, you may remember, was the rider

who damaged his neck so badly that he was banned by the Jockey Club doctor from riding in Britain. He was told it would be madness to continue.

Charlie, though, preferred a second opinion, his own, and, most notably, went on to ride his A Snip to victory in the gruelling Vekla Pardubicka in 1995 on an international licence. It was like walking to the North Pole to prove you didn't have a stiffie.

Mann rode 84 winners in Britain, but has established himself more readily as a businessman of the bizarre. Apart from selling a submarine from Hull's docks, he has dealt in caviar and American grain. He doesn't mind letting you know he has been a bit of a wheeler-dealer in his time.

"I like to think I'm pretty streetwise and to survive as a trainer you've got to be like that," he said yesterday. "From riding to training takes a bit of doing, and being streetwise doesn't hurt you. If you need to make a few quid every day you

get out of bed a bit earlier than most."

This is a milestone year for Mann. At the end of February, he moves from Kings Farm Stables to Whitcombe Park, which may only be a mile away.

**RICHARD EDMONDSON**  
NAP: Pine Ridge Lad (Southwell 3.30)  
NB: Sell By The Stars (Kempton 3.10)

on the Ordnance Survey map of Upper Lambourn but is light years removed in terms of facilities. "We've got horses all over the shop at the moment," he said. "We've got only 18 boxes in our main yard and we've got 36 horses in, eight at various studs and about 50 on the books with no room to put them all."

"At the new place we'll have an absolutely top-class establishment, including facilities we haven't got right now. 54 boxes, horsewalkers, jumping rings and 20 acres of land. It's amazing to think that when we started less than five years ago I had just two horses and a £28,000 overdraft."

Mann will be 40 on the eve

of the Grand National, and this summer, he marries one of his owners, Susannah Barradough, whom he will not exactly be rescuing penniless from a woman's refuge. "She's got a lot more money than I have," he observed.

Charlie is not really destitute himself and has managed to assemble some wealthy owners at his court. The unkind say this is because he is very good at speaking the stuff you find in farmers' fields, but there are also figures to back up his training skills. Mann has increased his total for the four years he has held a licence and is on course to continue the pattern. "I've attracted the owners through good looks and charm I hope," he said. "But, really, it's results basically, and if you get winners you get owners."

A winner at Ascot tomorrow would post an emphatic advertisement, and to hear Mann talk you realise that he has already set aside several hours on Sunday morning to take phone calls. "He [Charlie] won't round

there on the same ground last time and he's quite well handicapped," the trainer reported. "I think Or Royal is a two-and-a-half-mile horse and Mulligan has got his jumping problems, so they've all got to be beat. He's a decent little horse, he's in great form and he worked really well the other day."

"Mr Dunwoody wanted to ride him [though Mick Fitzgerald actually takes the mount] so that's always an incentive to run a horse, but even if he wins we won't be satisfied. We're still very hungry and marriage won't stop that. We'll still keep going forward hopefully."



Mann: more than charm

# Challenger takes a fall instead of narrow failure

Calliope Bay won an eventful John Bull Chase at Wincanton yesterday in the colours of the former Pink Floyd guitarist Roger Waters. But the frustrating Challenger Du Luc's run of secondariness came to an abrupt end when he landed on the floor at the fourth-last fence when going ominously well.

With only Stately Home left standing - his other two rivals Amtrak Express and Trying Again were both pulled up - Oliver Sherwood's nine-year-old came home with 10 lengths to spare under Jimmy McCarthy.

"People crab Calliope Bay for his jumping but he's always trying and not really a natural jumper," Sherwood said. "But he's my back at home and a real star."

"I will have to look seriously at the Racing Post Chase at Kempton now and though he's in the Cheltenham Gold Cup I think the races are too close together. If he won the Racing Post Chase that would be his Gold Cup."

Nevertheless, Coral reacted by halving Calliope Bay's Gold Cup odds to 50-1 from 100-1 and extended Challenger Du Luc's price to 33-1 from 25-1. The same firm also cut Escartigue to 40-1 from 50-1 after David Nicholson's novice cantered to a facile win in the Grade Two Towton Chase at Wetherby.

Challenger Du Luc's rider, Tony McCoy, bounced back to win the novices' handicap chase on Capenway, described by his trainer, Jeff King, as "the unluckiest horse I've ever trained". In a race that resembled a battle with only four of the 16 runners completing the course, Capenway had luck on his side this time as he managed to overcome a final-fence blunder.

Jonathan Lower, the first jockey to ride in Britain despite being diagnosed as diabetic, did not enjoy the perfect return. His only mount, the 2-7 chance Totally Yours, was defeated by the 33-1 shot American in the claiming hurdle.

## KEMPTON

1.00 Almond Rock	3.10 Eulogy
1.35 Macy (nb)	3.40 MYRTLE QUEST (nap)
2.05 Horstock	4.10 Salaman
2.40 Darcy	

**GOING:** Soft.  
1. Right-hand course. Precisely fast. Run-in of 200yd.  
2. Course is an ASOT at Sunbury. Kempton Park railway station adjoins course. ADVERTISEMENT: Club 52 (Gurnon) 10-25; 25-year-old; 25; Silver Ring 52. Accompanied child under-16 free. CAR PARK: Members 52; remainder free.  
3. LEADING TRAINERS: D Nicholson, 12 winners from 18 races gives a success rate of 66.7%; M Henderson, 13 from 17 (77%); K Bailey, 12 from 13 (92%); R Allen, 11 from 13 (85%).  
4. LEADING JOCKEYS: M A Fitzgerald, 21 wins from 18 races gives a success rate of 55.6%; M Henderson, 16 from 17 (94%); R Dunwoody, 15 from 18 (83%); A McCoy, 9 from 11 (82%).  
5. FAVOURITES: 1st win in 300 races (98.7%).  
BLINKED FIRST TIME: None.

1.00 ASHFORD NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) (DIV I) £4,000 added 2m Penalty Value £2,658
1. ROAD RACER (10) (M A Fitzgerald) 5.10. J. McCarthy
2. ALMOND ROCK (11) (M A Fitzgerald) 5.10. J. McCarthy
3. MACY (12) (M A Fitzgerald) 5.10. J. McCarthy
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## Morgan needs storming display to blow away grief's dark clouds

The death of his parents has had a profound effect on Darren Morgan's snooker career. Instead of a stacking his mantlepiece full of trophies, potentially the best player to come out of Wales now struggles to find the motivation to lift a cue. Tomorrow he plays in the Welsh Open in Newport knowing that his future is on the line. Guy Hodgson reports

As Darren Morgan left the Crucible last April he could see an end to his problems. The cloud that had descended on the death of his mother was lifting and he had clung on to a cherished spot in snooker's top 16. On the way back to his home in south Wales his father said: "Your mother's gone, that's it, you can't do anything about it, you must look to the future. Next season, for the first time in eight or nine years you've got no problems, you're going to fly. You'll probably win two or three tournaments."

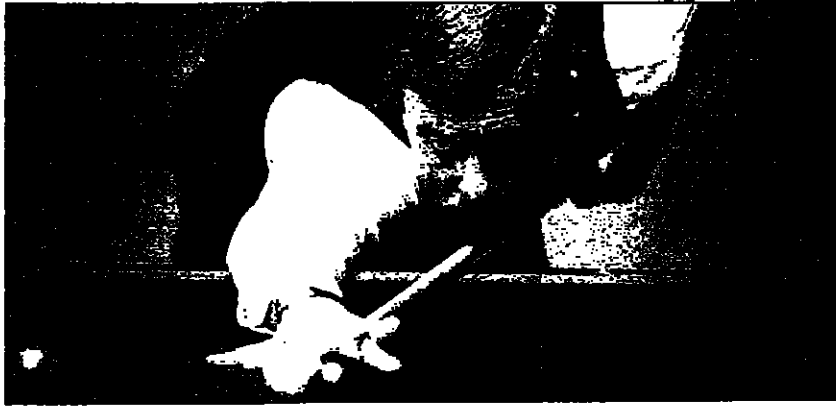
Two days later his father, Morgan Morgan, died.

Only Morgan, 31, can truly quantify his loss, but the rankings can provide a clue. Three years ago he was firmly established in the world's top eight, now he is provisionally ranked 19th. He finds snooker difficult, preferring to go fishing instead. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that when he plays in the Regal Welsh Open in Newport tomorrow his future will be on the line as well as a match.

If he holds on to his top 16 place this season, he says, it "will be like Christmas". He has problems practising properly and is in danger of becoming one of snooker's least fulfilled players. Just one tournament win, the 1996 Irish Masters, is a paltry return for a player of his ability.

"My father was my biggest critic and supporter, the driving force for me," Morgan said. "When you're used to being phoned down the club with 'how many hours have you done today' or being told to go back to practise because you've gone home early, it's a massive hole to fill when it's no longer there."

"I love my wife and kids and I know I should focus on them as my inspiration, but it's not the same. I've been playing snooker for 15 years and I bet he's lived



Darren Morgan: Struggle is 'cracking me up'

Photograph: Allsport

every ball. He couldn't be there all the time because of my mother's illness, but every single pot he was there with me."

Morgan's first inclination after his father died was to work like fury, to take out his grief on the table. But as the pain subsided his drive went with it and now he labours for two or three hours a day, just enough "so I'm not an embarrassment".

"I'm finding it very hard to get motivated," he said. "I've gone heavily into fish-

ing to relax and sometimes I think I'd rather be doing that than playing snooker. It's a lot less hassle and there's no disappointment. You go by a river and if you catch something you catch something, if you don't you have a peaceful afternoon."

"It would be ludicrous if I did drop out of the top 16, because on my day I know I'm a top four player. It's cracking me up to know I'm struggling. I still want to be world champion."

If those comments are contradictory, it probably sums up Morgan's state of mind. If you had to pinpoint a weakness in his prime years it was his mental approach. He did not have the will of the great champion, or at least he had not acquired it before his troubles began.

Steve Davis, in his blinkered pomp, would not have let himself be distracted when the boxer Naseem Hamed turned up at the Crucible in the last World Championship to support Morgan's opponent, Stephen Hendry. He would have used it as a motivational tool, driving away the world featherweight champion with the weight of his scoring.

Morgan, 6-4 up in the quarter-final and playing as well as anyone in the tournament, could barely pot a ball and his impetus had gone by the time the interval was reached and he could insist that the flamboyantly-dressed Hamed was removed from his front-row seat. He lost 13-10, another near miss in a career of so many nearlys.

That is in the past, the very thing Morgan is trying not to dwell on. "For the first few tournaments this year my head was in a jam jar. I played terrible, couldn't pot a ball at the UK Championship [where he

reached the last 16]. I started to improve and it proved to myself it's still all there and that if I can concentrate I can still play."

A few months ago Terry Griffiths said: "I was the best player to come out of Wales, which is probably the biggest compliment I've had in my life. Coming from a former world champion it was fantastic. He doesn't know how the hell I haven't got a mantlepiece full of trophies. He can't understand it and neither can I."

Perhaps greater understanding will come in Newport this week at a tournament that is staged just a few miles from his home. Morgan's friends believe just a little encouragement will make all the difference, but a poor performance could push him too far the other way.

"When it's on your own back door everyone wants to do well, but sometimes it can be a little bit harder," Morgan said. "Everyone wants you to succeed and you want to do well for them in return. It puts pressure on you. Sometimes you handle it all right and other times you fall apart."

With everything that has happened in his life in the past two years, Morgan deserves a break. Perhaps then the clouds truly will disappear.

### TENNIS

## Williams sisters get their act together

The teenage Williams sisters both won quarter-final matches in the Sydney International tennis tournament yesterday, setting up the possibility of a family affair in the final on Saturday.

The American teenager Serena Williams, playing in only her sixth tour event, had the

biggest win of her career by defeating Lindsay Davenport, the world No 3, yesterday to reach the semi-finals at the Sydney International tournament.

Williams, 16, then saw her 17-year-old sister, Venus, thrash Bulgaria's Magdalena Maleeva 6-2, 6-2 for a place in the other semi-final - leaving open the possibility of a Williams family final on Saturday.

Serena appeared to be outclassed and on her way out as she prepared to face two match

points at 2-5 in the second set after winning only one game in a first set lasting 20 minutes. But she staged a remarkable comeback, winning 20 of the next 21 points for the second set before beating her fellow American 1-6, 7-5, 7-5 in a match lasting two hours and five minutes.

Davenport's defeat left Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario as the last remaining seed in the women's singles. The top seed Martina Hingis was knocked out by Venus Williams in the first round. Sanchez Vicario, seeded five, beat the unseeded Natasha Zvereva of Belarus 6-1, 6-2 and now faces Serena Williams.

In the men's singles Tim Henman, the British No 2, set up a semi-final with the top seeded Australian, Patrick Rafter, by beating Sweden's Thomas Enqvist in three sets yesterday.

Henman, the defending champion and the 19th-ranked player in the world, dropped the first set before battling back to win 3-6, 7-5, 6-4. Earlier in the day Henman took just 28 minutes to complete a 7-6, 6-4 quarter-final victory over the Spaniard, Albert Portas.

To avoid slipping further in the world rankings next week, Henman must survive the serve-and-volley tactics of the US Open champion Rafter, who hammered America's Todd Martin after losing a tie-break in the second set 6-4, 6-7, 6-1.

● Steffi Graf, who has not played since last year's French Open, will make her comeback at a tournament in Tokyo from 2 to 8 February. The former No 1 in the world had no more problems with her left knee and was fit after three weeks of training in Florida.



The comeback kid: Serena Williams returns a backhand during her brave victory over her American compatriot Lindsay Davenport in Sydney yesterday. The teenager saved two match points

Photograph: Reuters

## Agassi continues his revival but Rusedski loses again

Andre Agassi, the former world No 1, boosted his confidence ahead of the Australian Open with a three-set victory over Goran Ivanisevic in Melbourne yesterday, while Greg Rusedski put a brave face on another defeat, this time by Pete Sampras.

Agassi, who is clawing his way back up the rankings after slipping to No 110 last year, beat the Croatian 6-4, 6-7, 6-3 in the Kooyong Classic, and, after his victory over Austria's Thomas Muster on Wednesday, that put him in the final.

"I'm hitting the ball really well, moving well, serving well, volleying well," Agassi said after the match. "I really feel like my game is coming around every time I'm out there, which is a great sign."

He will play the winner of today's match between Australia's Mark Philippoussis, who beat Rusedski on Wednesday, and the French Open champion, Gustavo Kuerten.

Sampras put on a stronger performance in the losers'

round of the exhibition tournament than he had in losing to Kuerten on Wednesday, and cruised past Rusedski 7-5, 6-1.

Rusedski, the world No 6, insisted he was not downhearted after this and his earlier defeat by Philippoussis, saying he just needed to "sharpen" his game before the Open starts on Monday.

He said he had again found Sampras in a particularly determined mood. "What usually happens is that when he has a defeat he comes back sharp the next day," Rusedski said. "Usually when I get to play him he has just had some terrible loss so he is extra motivated. When he comes to see me, it's like a wake-up when he has had one of his worst matches."

● Jim Courier, the winner in 1992 and 1993, has withdrawn from next week's Australian Open because of a shoulder injury. The American joins a list of absentees that includes Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Monica Seles, Steffi Graf and Jana Novotna.

## Weston steps up a class and is expected to fill Schofield's boots

Huddersfield's hopes of making an impression in the Super League may depend on the displays of their new stand-off, Craig Weston.

Dave Hadfield on the Australian who has a hard act to follow.

If Britain's most-capped stand-off feels the need to lace on the boots very often this year, it will mean that his own plans for the position at Huddersfield have back-fired.

In their player-coach, Garry Schofield, the newly promoted club have on hand the drier of the role for almost a decade. But it will suit Schofield best if the slightly less recognisable figure of Craig Weston fills the No 6 shirt successfully in 1998.

"I will play if I'm needed," says Schofield. "But I hope that I won't be."

The man he sees as his replacement, the 24-year-old

Weston, is new to Super League but not to Huddersfield.

The Australian was outstanding last season as they went on a winning roll that saw them take the Divisional Premiership at Old Trafford and, ultimately, Super League promotion through the back door after finishing second in the First Division and displacing Paris.

The question now is whether Weston can make the step up in class. Despite warnings from everyone - Schofield included - that it will be a whole new ball game, he approaches the experience with a matter-of-fact determination to take it all in his stride.

"It's going to be faster," he concedes. "But we can adjust to the extra pace. That will be the main difference - the hits won't be any harder. A lot of it will be mental. If we go out there thinking that they're all a lot better than us, then we're beaten before we start."

Weston has impressed good

### NEW FACES FOR '98

#### CRAIG WESTON

judges in this country. St Helens tried to sign him before the re-organisation of Super League gave him the chance to play at that level with Huddersfield and his pedigree is a good one. He played for the crack Australian Schoolboys side before moving to the Gold Coast and the South Queensland Crushers.

Neither of those clubs turned out to be an ideal career move, but Weston has shown his quality since relocating to Yorkshire. He might lack the blinding acceleration that made Schofield such a fearsome proposition in his prime, but his first season at

Huddersfield marked him out as a clever footballer with the ability to find gaps himself and to send others through them.

"I played a lot at centre last season, but stand-off is the role I want," he says. "I know that Garry - or his assistant, Phil Veivers, who can play there as well - can come in if things go wrong. That could put a bit of pressure on me, but my target is to make it unnecessary."

Just how central Weston is to Huddersfield's plans is illustrated by the way they have gone out and recruited a new scrum-half, specifically to dovetail with him.

The Cook Islander, Ali Davys, seemed to most observers to do pretty well there last season, but he has been replaced for the coming campaign by Chris Orr, with whom Weston played as a schoolboy in Sydney and as a professional with Gold Coast.

"We have played a lot together and have always worked well," Weston says. "One of Chris's characteristics is that he

is a very good talker and organiser.

"No disrespect to Ali, but that wasn't his strength, so having Chris there will take a lot of the pressure off me and make life so much easier."

"He came to England on his honeymoon last year and I was able to tip off Huddersfield that he was looking for a club."

The two have trained together in Sydney since the end of last season, spending long hours pounding up a punishing series of steps at their local beach, so neither fitness nor mutual understanding should be a problem when the 1998 Super League season begins.

With Orr buzzing and organising around the rucks, Weston should, in theory, be free to play the more expansive game that he relishes, releasing the likes of Paul Loughlin, Danny Arnold and Paul Cook to do some damage among the elite.

"Obviously it's going to be harder against the likes of Wigan and Bradford, but there



Craig Weston: Key role

are some poor Super League sides, some teams down towards the foot of the table who we think we can beat," Weston says.

"I enjoyed it so much last season that my aim has to be to enjoy it just as much this time."

If he does, it will probably mean that Schofield will be able to enjoy a sideline view of Huddersfield's progress. The former Great Britain captain will not be throwing away his boots just yet, but if Weston lives up to his coach's expectations they might only be used on the training paddock.

### RUGBY LEAGUE

## Murray wants trophies as well as attacking flair

Graham Murray has pledged to continue the Leeds tradition of attacking, entertaining rugby - with the important difference that he intends to win a trophy or two as well.

Leeds' new Australian coach met the players for the first time yesterday and is preparing them for Paul Broadbent's testimonial match against Sheffield Eagles on Sunday.

"There's a good foundation here, but it's a bit more of an attractive style of football that I'd like to play," Murray said. "There's a balance to be struck. Winning is the bottom line but we are in the entertainment business and we've got to give people a match worth watching."

The Leeds chief executive, Gary Hetherington, said it was Murray's commitment to attractive, winning rugby over the past 10 years that had convinced the club that he was the right man to replace Dean Bell, who has taken on a youth development role.

Murray was well regarded

for his work as coach at Ilwaco. He then coached Fiji in the 1995 World Cup and performed wonders with Hunter Mariners, taking them to the final of the World Club Championship in their only season.

It was the drawn-out death of the Mariners that freed Murray to take over at Headingley. "I'm very appreciative of the way the club waited for everything to be sorted out," he said as he took over a job he was offered last November.

Murray has watched tapes of Leeds in action, singling out Iestyn Harris, Richie Blackmore and Adrian Morley as players he looks forward to working with. He is likely to return to Australia to fill his one remaining place on the overseas quota, with one of his players from the Mariners, Brad Godden, the leading candidate.

● Paul Rowley, the Halifax hooker, has signed a new three-year contract with the Super League club.

- Dave Hadfield







## Asprilla's new tune hits the wrong note with Toon Army

The two things the supporters of Newcastle United Football Club least expected to have to contemplate this season were relegation and the departure of Faustino Asprilla.

The drop can still be avoided, but the exit of a Tyneside favourite looks to be a formality. Nick Duxbury reports.

The shocks came thick and fast yesterday at Newcastle. The club confirmed that the player second only to Alan Shearer in the affections of the Toon Army had indeed asked to leave and moreover they had given him permission to talk to Parma about a move back to the Italian club.

Faustino Asprilla, 29-year-old Colombian international, who joined Newcastle from Parma in February 1996 for £7.5m, went about training as usual, but the heart the fans thought beat only for Tyneside now longs for Italy.

## Fjortoft fits the bill for Barnsley

The Barnsley manager Danny Wilson signed the Norwegian international Jan Age Fjortoft from Sheffield United yesterday - after initial fears the deal was dead due to Brian Deane's £1m departure to Benfica.

Wilson moved in for Fjortoft yesterday after watching him play for the Blades in Tuesday's FA Cup third-round replay at Bury, but when the Benfica coach, Graeme Souness, moved in to secure Deane the deal seemed in jeopardy.

United's chief executive, Charles Green, had said the club would not contemplate selling top strikers. But, in a change of policy which leaves United with just two senior forwards on their books in Dean Saunders and Gareth Taylor, the Blades have decided to part with both players.

Like Deane, Fjortoft has signed a two-and-a-half year deal with his new club, with Barnsley paying £800,000. The Oakwell chairman, John Dennis, believes the former Swindon and Middlesbrough striker is a much-needed addition to the squad, particularly with the £1.5m club record signing, the Macedonian international Georgi Hristov, having failed to

And there was more to come with the Newcastle manager, Kenny Dalglish, admitting that had he known of Asprilla's intentions he would never have sold Les Ferdinand to Tottenham for £6m. With Shearer injured, Ferdinand gone and Asprilla about to leave, Dalglish is left with a pop-gun attack with which to secure Premiership safety.

Dalglish was disappointed at Asprilla's decision, but realised that if the Colombian wanted to go there was not much the club could do about it. The manager also claimed that Asprilla had told him at the start of the season that he would be happy to stay until the summer.

Although the United boss tried to persuade the South American to change his mind, it now seems certain the way is left open for the striker, whose skills delighted the St James' Park crowd, to return to Serie A with Parma.

"We believed Tino was perfectly happy at the start of the season. If not we would not have sold Les Ferdinand to Tottenham," said Dalglish, who will hope to recoup the bulk of the £7.5m that his predecessor,

Kevin Keegan, paid for the entertaining Asprilla.

"When his [Asprilla's] agent spoke to us just before Christmas and said his player was unhappy we dismissed this. In fact, we ignored Parma's approaches twice. But, if he wants to leave, it is in our interests as well as his to allow him to go."

"The club have spoken to Parma and Tino will be talking to them but most of the stuff is done on the deal - certainly between Parma and Tino - and it should go through very quickly."

Dalglish admitted that Asprilla had been popular in the dressing-room with his teammates as well as with the fans.

"He was very popular with the rest of the lads and instead of remembering recent days I would like to remember him for his performance against Barcelona," he said, referring to Asprilla's stunning Champions' League hat-trick against the Spanish giants in mid-September.

"It's a bit of a disappointment that we've had to make a decision at this moment in time and that disappointment I am sure will be shared with our supporters," he added.

Asprilla was at Newcastle's Chester-le-Street training ground yesterday, although he did not train with the rest of the squad as they prepared for the Bolton game.

The Colombian has been struggling for form and fitness since recovering from a groin operation which kept him out for three months and is currently out of the side with a thigh injury.

Asprilla's imminent departure is sure to put Dalglish under increasing pressure to make a major signing. Yesterday's signing of the 24-year-old former West Ham and Metz centre-back, David Terrier, did not quite fit the bill.

Keegan, now running the show at Third Division Fulham, was amazed to hear that Asprilla could be leaving.

"I fetched him and a lot of people blamed him for losing us the championship, which was totally unfair," Keegan said. "People questioned why he came. He was bought for the Newcastle fans not for anyone else and they will be very sad to see him go."

"They will miss him, but if Kenny thinks that is right then as long as he spends the money on another player of equal standing, who maybe can bring Newcastle more success than they are enjoying at the moment, I think the fans will put up with it."

Fulham deal, page 26  
More football, page 29

- Alan Nixon



Looking back: A subdued Faustino Asprilla arrives at Newcastle United's training ground in Chester-le-Street yesterday. Photograph: North News

## CRICKET

## Positive Russell ready to reclaim his Test place

Jack Russell can start his move back into the Test arena after a 17-month absence when he plays in the opening match of England's tour of the West Indies, starting here in Montego Bay, Jamaica, today.

The Gloucestershire wicket-keeper, who was dropped for the Pakistan Test at The Oval in August, 1996 and did not play in Zimbabwe or New Zealand last winter, or in the Ashes series last summer, looks to be among eight candidates for the first Test against West Indies at Sabina Park later this month.

He can begin to shed his frustrations in England's four-day match against Jamaica at Jarratt Park, in which the Test side will begin to take shape. After that, England have only a match at Chetwin Park, Kingston, against West Indies A before the serious business starts.

"I really hope I play in those two four-day matches," Russell said. "I've been out for 12 Tests and it really does seem longer than that. It gets harder every time when I'm left out, but I've remained positive and I've told everybody that I'll not finish up on 49 Tests."

Mike Atherton, Alec Stewart, Nasser Hussain, Graham Thorpe, Andy Caddick, Dean Headley, Angus Fraser and Russell can virtually rely on launching England's bid to win their first series in the Caribbean for 30 years. Mark Ramprakash, John Crawley and Adam Hoggie may be playing for one batting place, while Mark

Butcher could occupy the No 3 berth and be a fourth seamer.

Butcher, who opened in five of the six Tests against Australia last summer, is seen as adept at playing the short-pitched delivery, and England have a history of including three opening batsmen in the Caribbean.

England will be doubly conscious not to be as slow off the blocks as they were in Zimbabwe last winter and Atherton recognises time is short and the opportunity cannot be wasted.

"You can't struggle in the early games and expect to turn it on in the Tests," Atherton said. "We've got to get our side right to give us a chance to strike early. Winning is a habit and we've got to get into it."

Atherton acknowledged that it would not be possible to give everybody an outing in those two games. "We have got to get into the groove as quickly as possible," he said. He thinks there are two ways of dealing with the challenge of ending England's long drought in the West Indies.

"The record will either intimidate us or we will use it as an immense challenge. The whole squad can see a huge opportunity to be the first team to win in the Caribbean for a long time," he added.

Jamaica will pick from a squad of 14 and will be captained by Jimmy Adams and not Courtney Walsh. The fast bowler and former West Indies captain will sit the match out.

- David Field, Montego Bay, Jamaica

## Unrest may lead to switch from Guyana to Antigua

The West Indies Cricket Board will decide next week whether England's third Test with the West Indies will go ahead in Guyana, where political unrest after last month's elections has led to violence.

With opposition parties disputing the election results, large numbers of people are ignoring a government order banning street marches. Police have used tear gas and even fired indiscriminately into the crowds to disperse protesters.

A bomb exploded last week in the only major hotel in Georgetown, the capital of the state on the north coast of South America, has added to

the tensions. The Foreign Office has advised against all but essential travel to Guyana.

The Guyanese Cricket Board, which is scheduled to stage the Test at Georgetown's Bourda ground, is holding a series of meetings with British High Commission representatives over the next few days before the decision is taken on whether the game start as planned on 27 February or whether it should be moved.

The GCB secretary, Bish Panday, said yesterday he was optimistic that the match will go ahead, but an alternative could be to take it to Antigua.

Action for A team, page 29

## RUGBY UNION

## Surgeon lambasted for claiming ear was not bitten

The Great Mystery of Simon Fenn's Ear reached new heights of black comedy yesterday as both London Scottish and Bath distanced themselves from the latest medical opinion on the subject.

Chris Hewett reports on a very peculiar turn of events.

Philip Bliss, honorary surgeon to Bath Rugby Club, dipped an uninvited toe into the murky waters of the Kevin Yates ear-biting saga yesterday and promptly found himself on the receiving end of some sharp rebuttals from every conceivable direction. Mr Bliss' view that the injury suffered by Simon Fenn during last weekend's Bath-London Scottish cup tie showed no sign of being caused by a rogue set of teeth brought a furious reaction from the complainants and an embarrassed one from the defendants.

Mr Bliss had not personally examined Fenn at any stage of the scandal, yet he still felt able to venture an opinion on the matter. "There was no tissue loss and no teeth marks," he was reported as saying. "In basic terms, the only person who said it was a bite was Fenn. It is perfectly arguable that it could have been a stud."

All of which was too much for London Scottish, who were already feeling tender at criticism of their initial move in citing the entire Bath front row for foul play. "It was a bite, not a boot," Richard Yerbury, the Exiles' chief executive, said. "We have evidence that clearly shows the cause of injury and it will be presented to the Rugby Football Union at the appropriate time."

"We want to resolve this properly and not turn it into a circus, but we will take very firm steps to slap down attempts to divert attention from the real cause of injury. Claims that this was not a bite are starting to seem like a smoke-screen. Mr Bliss' comments

have caused outrage here at the club."

Bath were no more supportive of the surgeon's "findings" and quickly distanced themselves from his comments. "They have been made in a personal capacity and not as an officer or employee of the club," said the club in a formal statement. "We neither requested nor encouraged any statement from Mr Bliss."

Yates, the loose-head prop suspended by Bath pending further inquiries, will appear before an internal disciplinary hearing on Tuesday. The proceedings may be chaired by an independent legal expert, possibly a circuit judge, but whatever the findings, the whole issue will still go before the RFU's own disciplinary panel.

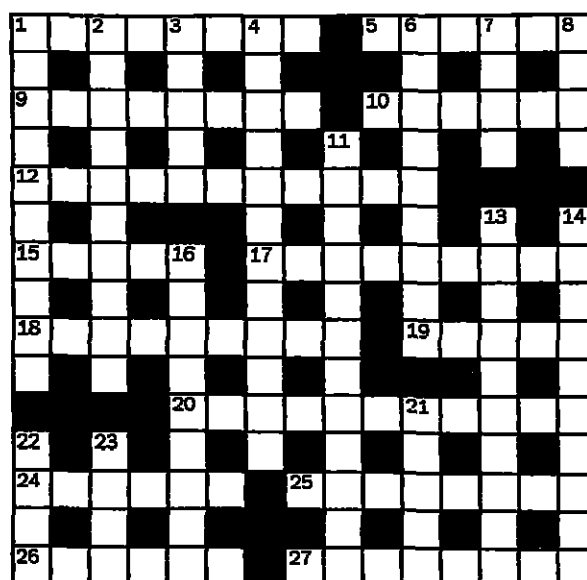
Meanwhile, Philippe Saint-André, the French captain, will miss next month's Five Nations opener with England in Paris because of a chronic thigh condition. The Gloucester wing had a scan on Wednesday before being ruled out of all rugby for six weeks.

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3589, Friday 16 January

By Phil

Thursday's solution

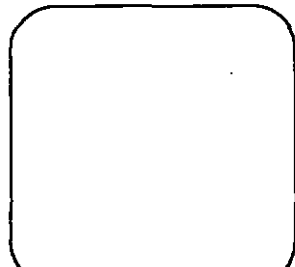
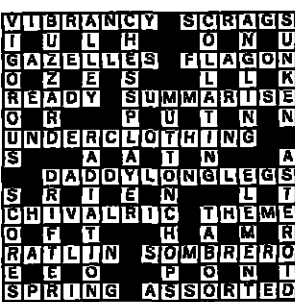


### ACROSS

- 1 Get rid of people in childish competition? (4, 4)
- 5 Frightened school's head was concerned (6)
- 9 Punter gets mare nobbled (8)
- 10 Old fool at the end of the line? (6)
- 12 Went on game of golf, becoming persuaded (6, 5)
- 15 Become the recipient of fashionable cut treatment (5)
- 17 Sporting contest: Test involving most of the cricket side? (9)
- 18 Outgoing partygoer brought in no longer testotest? (9)
- 19 Girl appearing in myth or allegory (5)

### DOWN

- 20 Splendid crowd - three, say? (5, 6)
- 24 Banking system rejected in the beginning (6)
- 25 Watch exercises, beginning to consider getting into condition (8)
- 26 Child with nothing snatching mother's bit of salad (6)
- 27 How contract could be described, to a large extent (2, 6)
- 1 What's important for theatre audience? A good deal rests on actor's part (10)
- 2 Confuse police - act unexpectedly, snatching money (10)
- 3 Girl came up to embrace one (5)



- 4 Gets over song and eases tension? (6, 3, 3)
- 6 Top cat due to be overthrown in this? Top dog, rather! (4, 5)
- 7 Split hair, if treated, will yield this (4)
- 8 Night and day on a boat (4)
- 11 Evidently failing to make the cut? (3, 2, 3, 4)
- 13 Baffle directors in showing underlying support (10)
- 14 Sins are fun when misbehaving? It's not right (10)
- 16 Gather the idea's to continue in power? (9)
- 21 Take the lid off a French policy for the EU (5)
- 22 Idiot student brought in a small amount (4)
- 23 Some farm life held up in documentary? (4)